VOGUE
SINGAPORE

ISSUE TWENTY TWO
may/june

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Editor's LETTER

Back in early January when we were mapping out *Vogue* Singapore's themes for the year, my team and I decided to approach the idea of sustainability, but in a human manner. When one thinks of sustainability, there are a lot of things that come to mind, from climate change to water pollution. But how does this identify with Singaporeans on a personal level? What does sustainability actually mean to us and how do we genuinely broach the subject?

To be a guardian is to preserve and safeguard. It is the belief that one's actions can encourage change. This leads to the theme of this glorious issue, one that has brought together not just another 'ripe for the picking, go green' message, but a sense of strength, a glimmer of hope and a fistful of perseverance.

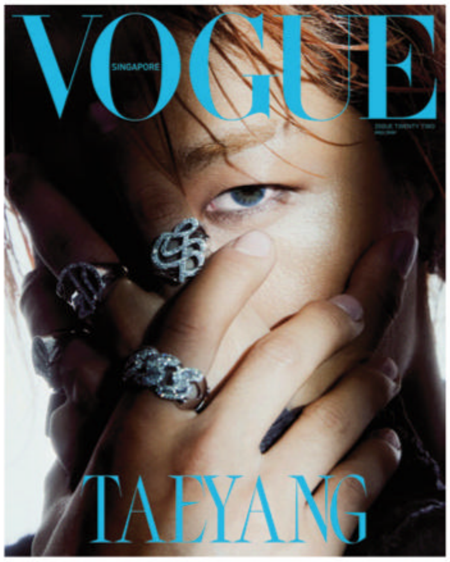
In this issue K-pop legend and cover star TAEYANG opens up to digital writer Azrin Tan (page 108) on finding light from within and how that has helped him cope with the darkest of times. Today, he re-emerges at the top of his game with a single motivation: to inspire through his actions, music and new approach to life—one which, he says, is akin to planting a seed.

The ability to stay centred in hopes of being true to one's identity is never an easy feat given the constant lures of social media. Associate beauty editor Emily Heng questions what we stand to lose in her op-ed, 'No Filter' (page 66), while rising photographer Joseph Koh and fashion writer Bryan Ho explore what it means to be the creator of one's own identity as seen through the sartorial universes of eight fascinating women (page 42).

The strength as seen in the eyes of these women brings me back to a shoot I styled, featuring veteran Singaporean actress Janice Koh. Conversing with her on set, I couldn't quite find the words to broach a heartbreaking subject—her recent battle with oral cancer, which led to a portion of her tongue being surgically removed. In a soul-baring interview, she tells associate lifestyle editor Chandreyee Ray about the trauma of losing her superpower and eventually finding a championing voice from within (page 104).

It is so invigorating to me how the sheer idea of sustainability doesn't stop at the upcycling of fabrics or the discovery of new sustainable designers (page 22). While those subjects remain important, what makes this issue extra special is that it is able to take you by the hand and lead you deeper into the very core of your existence, uncovering how we, as human beings, need to sustain ourselves against life's capricious ways—and emerge at the end of the journey as guardians of our own destination.

Desmond Lim
Editor-in-Chief, Vogue *Singapore*



TAEYANG wears Gallery Dept by Mue jacket;
MCI Jewelry ring and necklace

Photographer JUNGWOOK MOK
Fashion direction DESMOND LIM
Style direction GEE EUN

Hair HYUNWOO LEE
Make-up HEAKYUNG LIM

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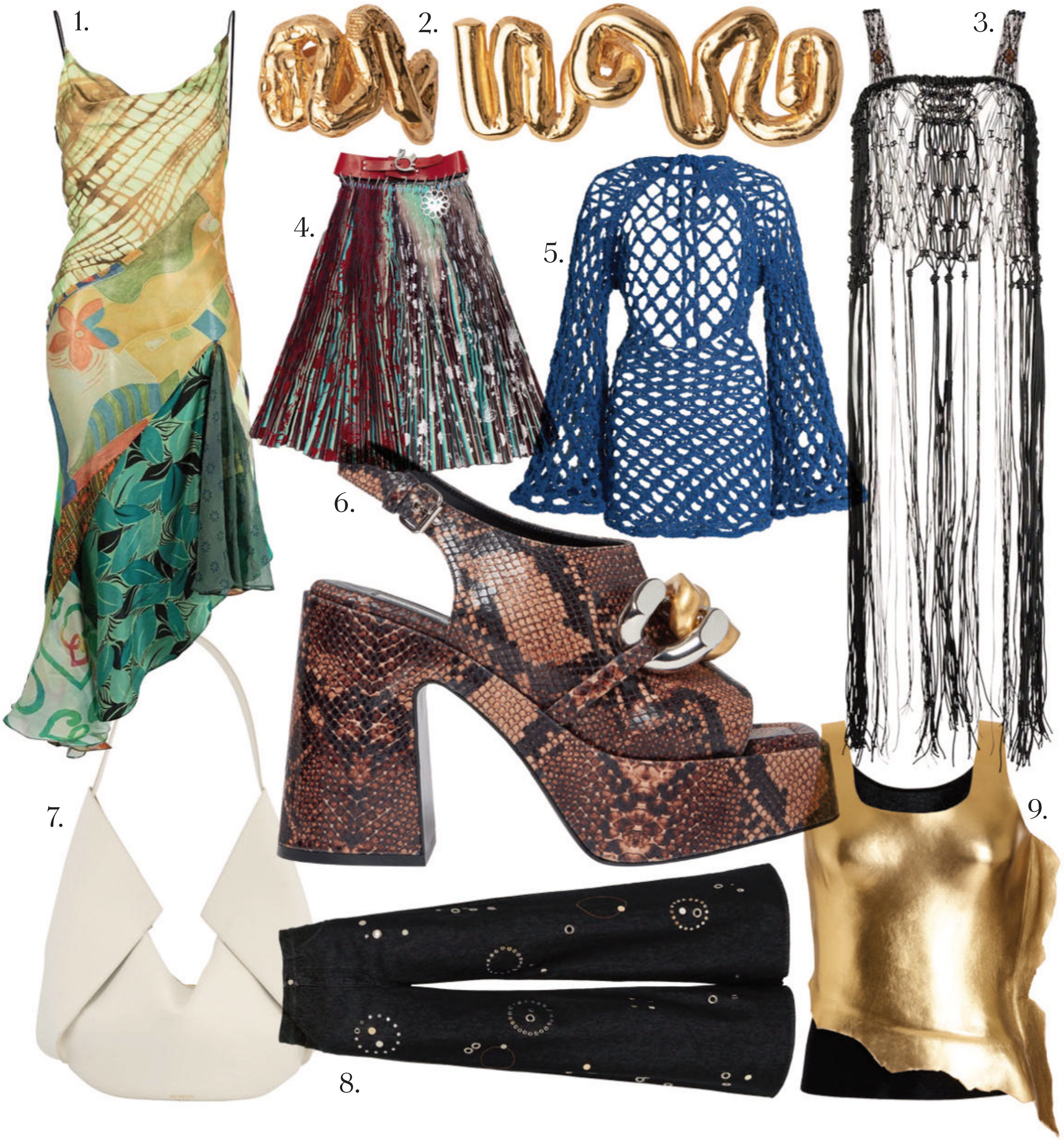
21–57

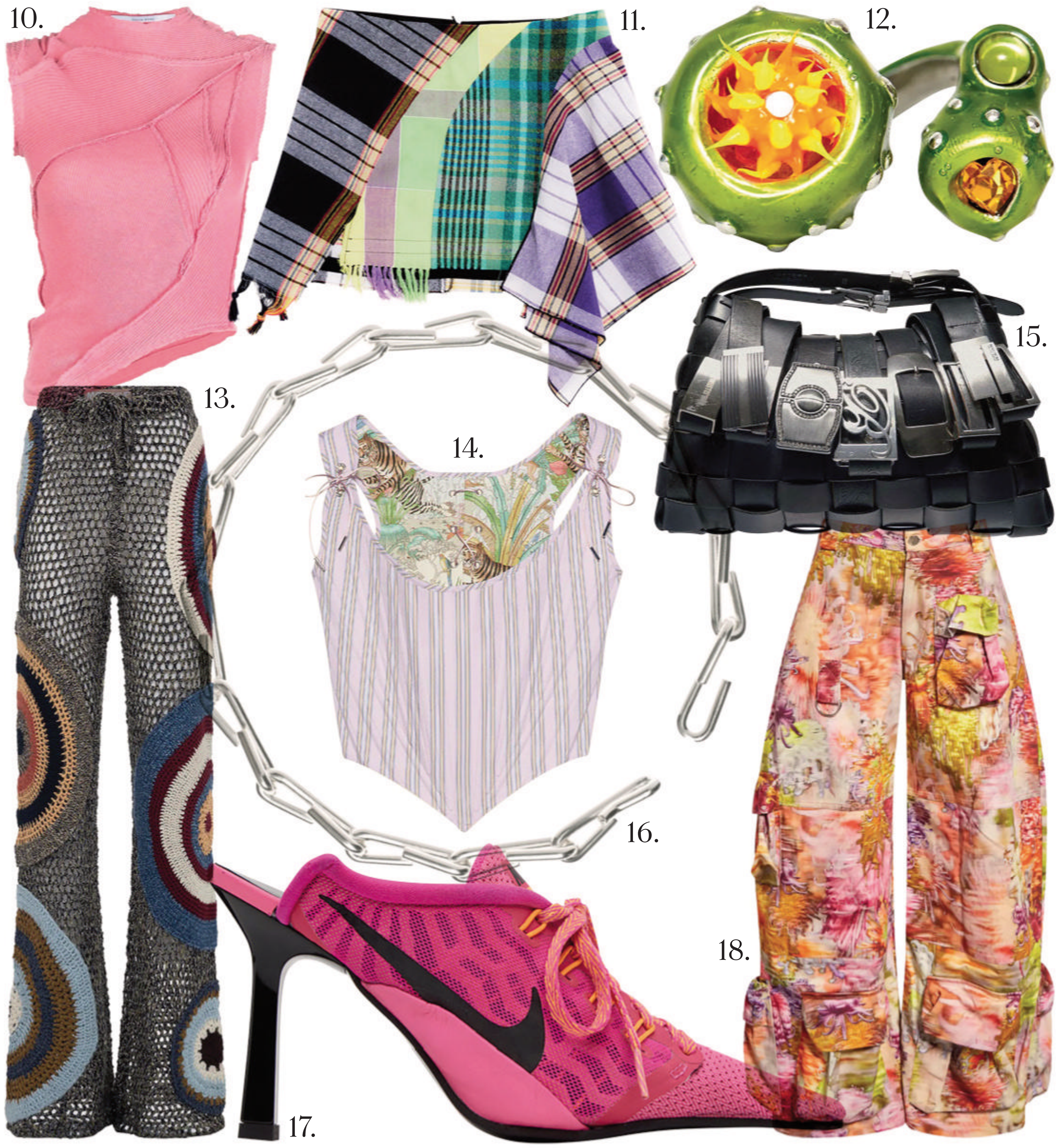
Blumarine jacket, skirt and bag; Moschino belt and heels; all prices upon request



Editor's PICKS

From artisanal crafts to upcycled fabrics, peruse *Vogue* Singapore's edit of the sustainable designers to have on your radar.

Edit JASMINE ASHVINKUMAR



1. *Conner Ives* dress, $1,578 from Farfetch **2.** *Vasiliki* earrings, £420 **3.** *Niccolò Pasqualetti* top, $1,019 from Farfetch **4.** *Chopova Lowena* skirt, £890 **5.** *Nia Thomas* dress, US$555 from Moda Operandi **6.** *Stella McCartney* heels, $1,680 **7.** *Ree Projects* Riva bag, €695 **8.** *Chloé* jeans, US$3,098 **9.** *Gabriela Hearst* top, US$6,350 **10.** *Talia Byre* top, €490 from Browns Fashion **11.** *Rave Review* skirt, €450 **12.** *Collina Strada* ring, US$200 **13.** *Morphine* pants, price upon request **14.** *Gucci Continuum* x *Alice Pons* corset, €990 **15.** *Hodakova* bag, €3,000 **16.** *All Blues* necklace, US$1,250 **17.** *Ancuta Sarca* heels, US$915 from Ssense **18.** *Collina Strada* pants, US$475 from Nordstrom

White Lace

Go monochromatic with white-on-white lace, from babydoll dresses to playful collars.

Photography PETROS
Styling XANDER ANG

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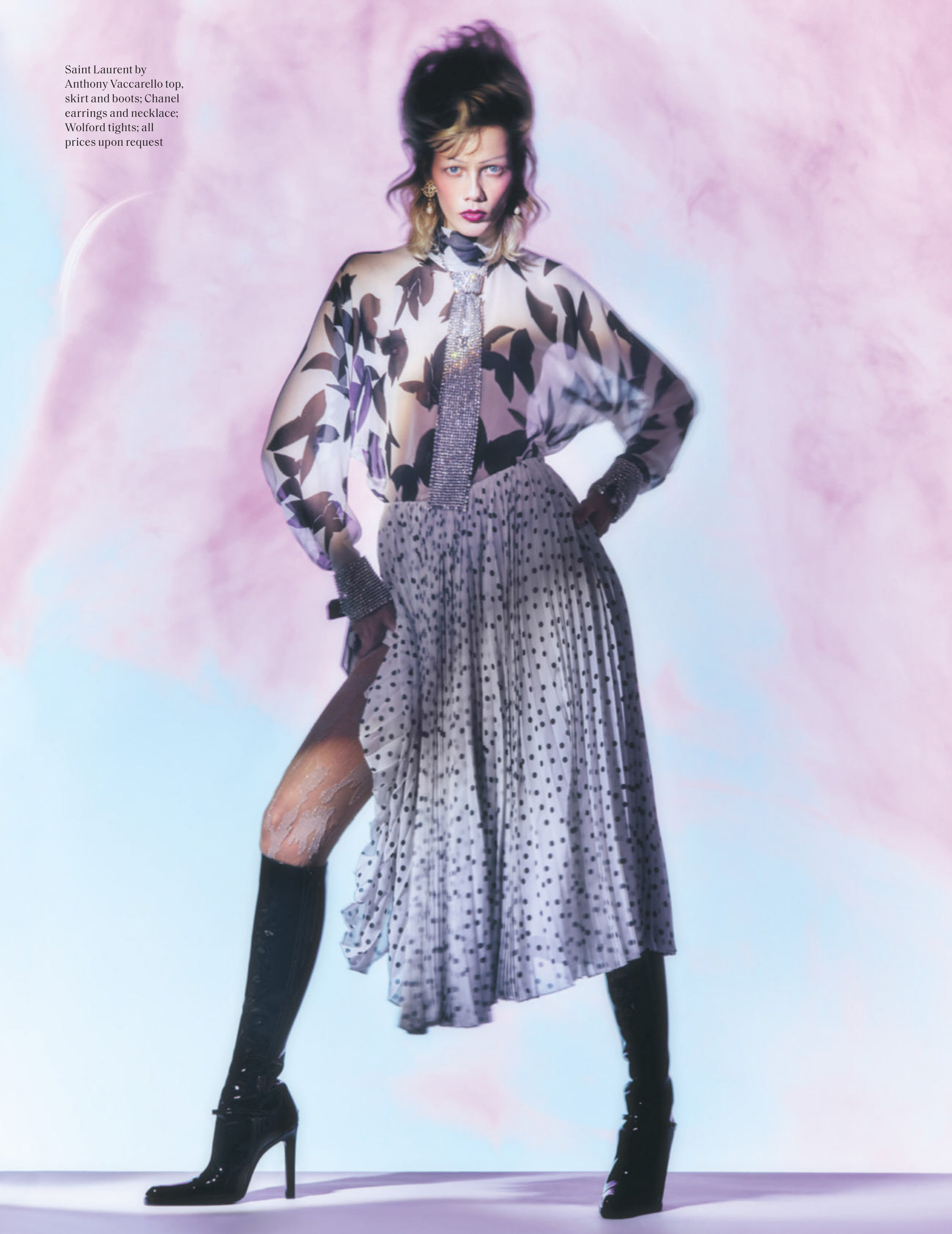
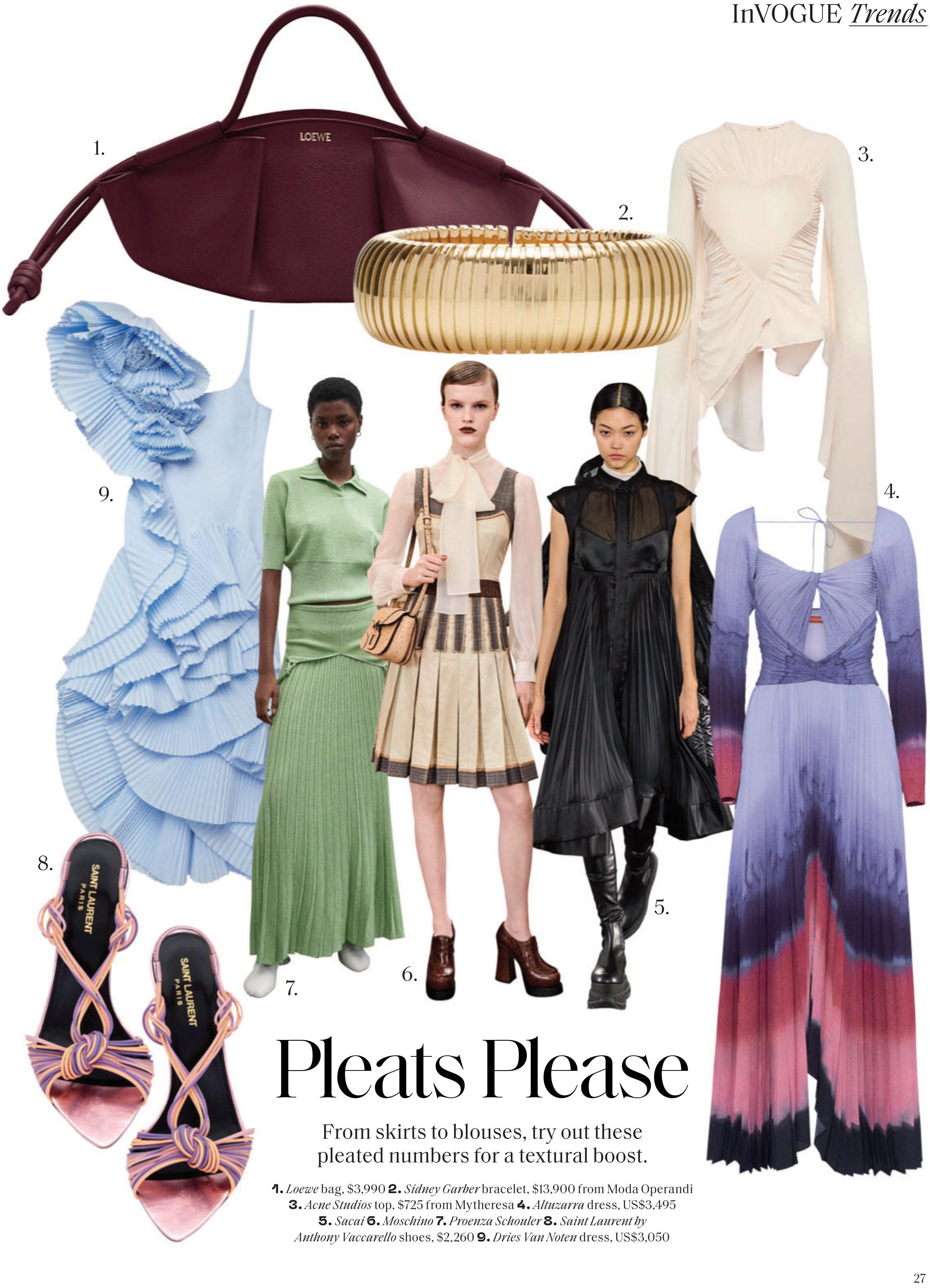
PRADA
MILANO

1. *Oscar de la Renta* skirt, US$1,990 from Moda Operandi **2.** *Nili Lotan* dress, US$850 from Moda Operandi **3.** *Chloé* dress, US$4,109 **4.** *Chanel* **5.** *Erdem* **6.** *Alaïa* bag, US$1,200 **7.** *Prada* hat, $1,330 **8.** *The Row* **9.** *Zimmerman* dress, $3,700 from Net-a-Porter

Prada dress; Chanel earrings, bracelets and necklace; all prices upon request



Saint Laurent by
Anthony Vaccarello top,
skirt and boots; Chanel
earrings and necklace;
Wolford tights; all
prices upon request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Pleats Please

From skirts to blouses, try out these pleated numbers for a textural boost.

1. *Loewe* bag, $3,990 **2.** *Sidney Garber* bracelet, $13,900 from Moda Operandi **3.** *Acne Studios* top, $725 from Mytheresa **4.** *Altuzarra* dress, US$3,495 **5.** *Sacai* **6.** *Moschino* **7.** *Proenza Schouler* **8.** *Saint Laurent by Anthony Vaccarello* shoes, $2,260 **9.** *Dries Van Noten* dress, US$3,050

Short Term

Beat the heat with a luxe take on a summer staple.

1. *The Row* **2.** *Givenchy* **3.** *Loewe* shorts, $3,900 **4.** *Miu Miu* shorts, $730 **5.** *Courrèges* shorts, $570 from Mytheresa **6.** *Etro* **7.** *Ferragamo* **8.** *JW Anderson* shorts, US$1,750 **9.** *Isabel Marant* shorts, US$1,754 from Net-a-Porter **10.** *Valentino* shorts, $2,780

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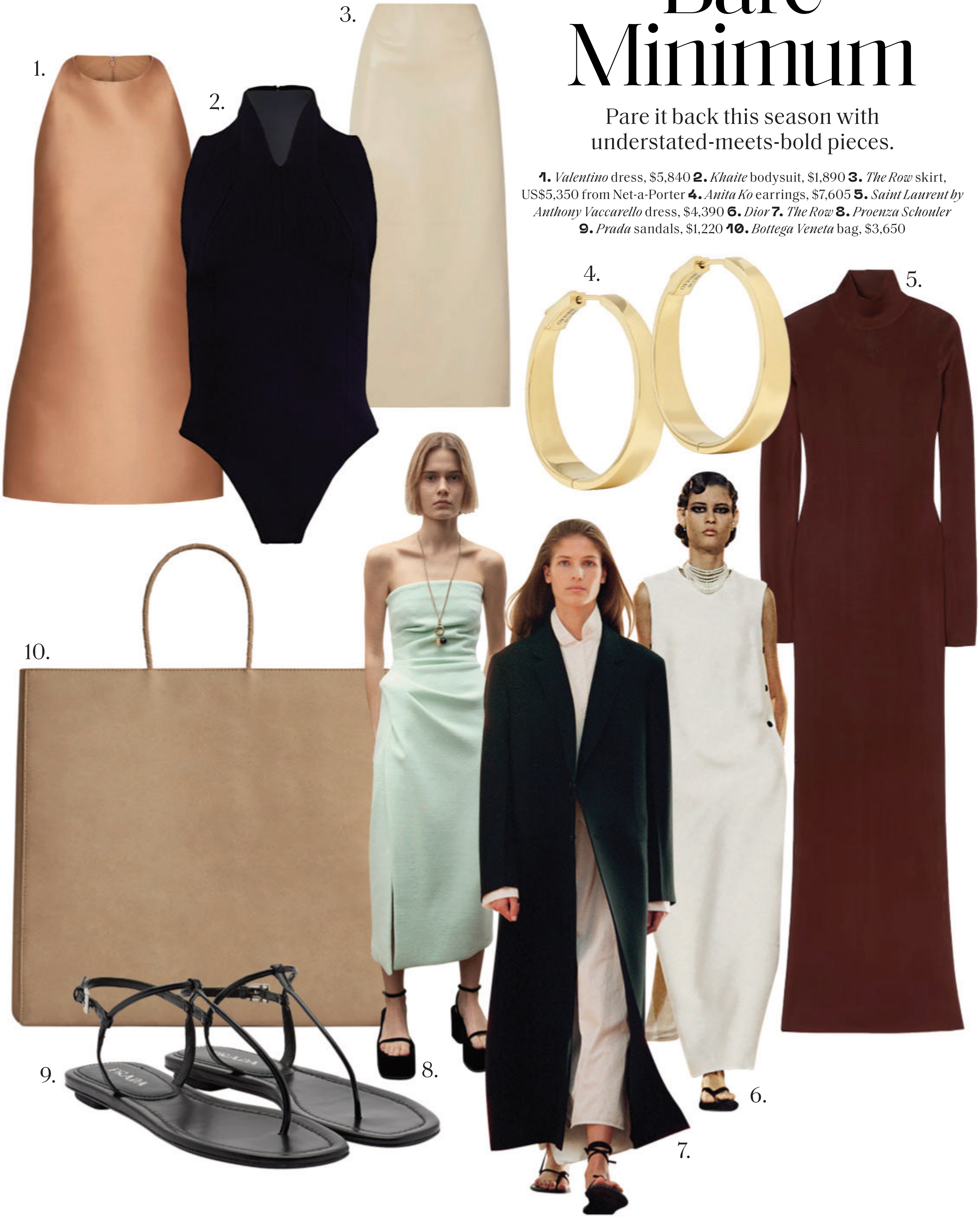
Etro top; Prada shorts; Roberto Cavalli belt; Chanel earrings and bracelets; Wolford tights; all prices upon request

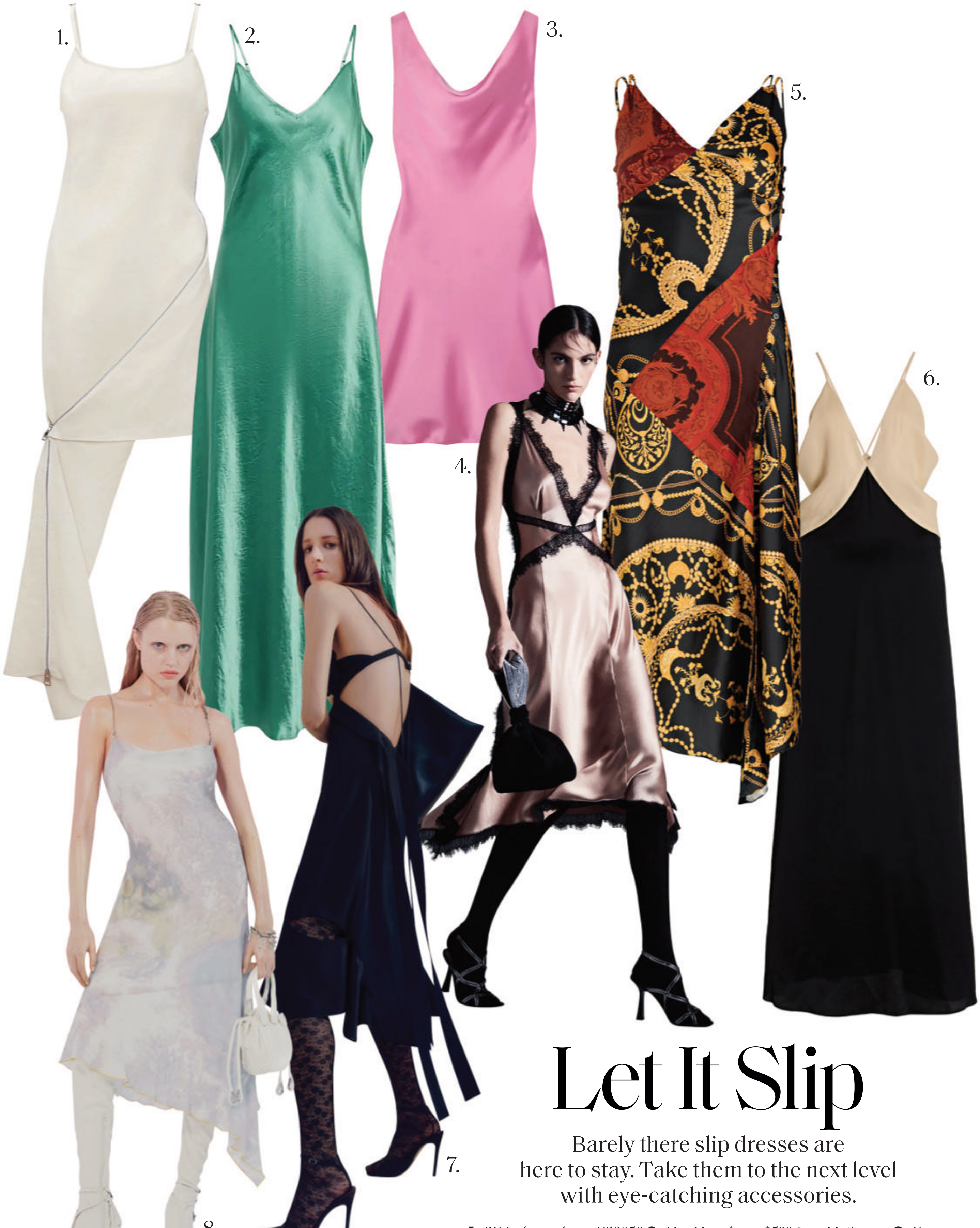
Ferragamo top and
skirt; Chanel earrings;
all prices upon request

Bare Minimum

Pare it back this season with understated-meets-bold pieces.

1. *Valentino* dress, $5,840 **2.** *Khaite* bodysuit, $1,890 **3.** *The Row* skirt, US$5,350 from Net-a-Porter **4.** *Anita Ko* earrings, $7,605 **5.** *Saint Laurent by Anthony Vaccarello* dress, $4,390 **6.** *Dior* **7.** *The Row* **8.** *Proenza Schouler* **9.** *Prada* sandals, $1,220 **10.** *Bottega Veneta* bag, $3,650





Let It Slip

Barely there slip dresses are
here to stay. Take them to the next level
with eye-catching accessories.

1. *JW Anderson* dress, US$850 **2.** *Max Mara* dress, $529 from Mytheresa **3.** *Norma Kamali* dress, US$319 from Net-a-Porter **4.** *Alberta Ferretti* **5.** *Marine Serre* dress, €900 **6.** *Toteme* dress, US$740 from Moda Operandi **7.** *Victoria Beckham* **8.** *Diesel*

Givenchy dress; Chanel hat scarf, earrings, necklace, belt and bracelets; Paco Rabanne mini chain bag; Moschino heels; all prices upon request

Hair, Pierre Saint Seve; make-up, Marion Robine; model, Marjan Jonkman/ Women Paris.

For pre-autumn 2023, brands from Blumarine to Erdem took inspiration from the colour green.

PEACE *of* MIND

From mental health to self-preservation, the colour green has long been an ode to guardianship. Here's how fashion's biggest brands channelled the colour for the pre-autumn 2023 season.

Words BRYAN HO

Fashion has always served as an enchanting reflection of the world we live in, a seemingly fantastical yet truthful dose of reality. Since the dawn of time, designers have paid close regard to the sociopolitical and cultural zeitgeist, often looking for ways to incorporate tender topics into their various collections.

In society today, many wrestle with maintaining a healthy work-life balance due to arduous commutes and extensive corporate hours. The pace of life has noticeably sped up over the years, resulting in a decline in both mental and physical health.

With green often being associated with mental health—as well as peace and tranquillity derived from nature—it comes as no surprise that brands have tapped into the shade as a means of expression. Since the time of the ancient Egyptian civilisation, the colour has been widely used in art and fashion, seeing a resurgence during the Impressionist movement due to advancements in green pigments and paints. In fashion, emerald green was highly revered in the 1800s, commonly seen as the colour of choice

FROM LEFT: ETRO, BLUMARINE, ULLA JOHNSON, CHRISTOPHER KANE, PRABAL GURUNG, STELLA MCCARTNEY, FERRAGAMO, ETRO, PROENZA SCHOULER, DAVID KOMA, ERDEM. ALL IMAGES PRE-AW23

for gloves and evening dresses. Further associated with hope and inner strength, the colour continues to resonate in the current day.

Daniel Lee's era at Bottega Veneta saw a reinvention of the brand featuring a signature shade of the beloved colour, a jubilant crayon-bright version of green. Prada opted for muted alternatives of emerald and sea green to drive home a reimagined minimalism, while Loewe turned to an energetic lime hue.

An avalanche of brands both big and small seem to be picking up on the allure and appeal of the soothing colour, which was prevalent in the pre-autumn 2023 collections. Christopher Kane and Sportmax, for example, opted for piercing neon, while Proenza Schouler and Balmain seamlessly weaved it into elegant stripes and monogram patterns. Blumarine proves that it is a colour that embodies confidence, stripping it of all theatrics to showcase a subversive and alluring off-the-shoulder maxi dress.

Green represents *renewal, abundance* and a *love* for *oneself* and those *around you.*

Perhaps it's the increased emphasis placed on prioritising one's mental health in the world today, or maybe the constant flood of neutral-toned outfits and capsule wardrobes have simply overstayed their welcome. While wearing green may have once been considered a quirky and eccentric choice, one thing is for certain: it is a hue that represents renewal, abundance and a love for oneself and those around you. ●

THIS PAGE
Blackpink's Jennie carries the latest Chanel 22 mini handbag in pink.

FACING PAGE
Jennie is photographed by Inez & Vinoodh against the skyline of her native Seoul.

A New DAWN

Jennie of Korean superstar girl group Blackpink is named the fourth face of the **Chanel** 22 bag, which is presented in a mini rendition.

Words CARMEN SIN

> “My first *solo* came out when I was 22 and *Blackpink* started our *new world tour* in 2022. To me, 22 means a *new beginning*.”

Gabrielle Chanel was a woman of numbers. Her second fragrance, the spirited No. 22, was named after its birth year of 1922 and quickly came to signify a certain precocious elegance. A century later, Virginie Viard debuted the Chanel 22 bag. Fresh, supple and sophisticated, it was the obvious descendant of its namesake. Slight yet luxe, it seemed made to dangle from the wrists of young style savants. With this in mind, who better to carry it than Jennie? No last name needed, the K-pop princess and global superstar has been named the fourth and latest face of the bag. Twenty-two is a special number for her too. “My first solo came out when I was 22 and we started our new world tour [with Blackpink] in 2022. To me, 22 means a new beginning,” she shares.

In the campaign, shot by famed duo Inez & Vinoodh, an imperious Jennie traipses around her native Seoul, the calfskin bag slung faithfully on her shoulder. She carries the mini Chanel 22, which keeps all the beloved features of the original—quilted leather body, metal chain interlaced with leather strap and the house’s signature double C medallion—only smaller. In a traditional Korean courtyard, the 27-year-old member of Blackpink is a vision of electric nowness; striking in fishnets and a white suit trimmed with pink feathers, yet, hand on pale pink bag, still grounded and continuous.

The Korean capital is the latest setting in the Chanel 22 metropolitan tour, after Los Angeles, Palm Springs and New York—where the first three films for the line were shot. For the fourth episode starring Jennie, Inez & Vinoodh have created an original story inspired by her unique personality. She joins the ranks of Lily-Rose Depp, Margaret Qualley and Whitney Peak, who brought the tote and backpack versions of the Chanel 22 to life.

On working with the illustrious fashion-photographers, Depp shares: “These images are, for me, an ode to the marriage between my identities as a Parisian and a Los Angeleno. I’ve known Inez & Vinoodh for a few years now and I think they did a beautiful job at creating scenes that help my personality shine through.”

Jennie shared a similar sentiment: “Inez & Vinoodh call me ‘my girl’. It’s comforting because they see me as a young woman, not just ‘Jennie’ in the spotlight. These images are an accurate representation of who I really am.” ●

IMAGES COURTESY OF CHANEL

Natural SELECTION

Referencing the ethos of Japanese design and the progressive degeneration of flora, creative director Ken Ijima highlights the creative process behind his slow fashion label **Vuja Dé**.

Words BRYAN HO

The name Ken Ijima is not unheard of in fashion. While his introduction into the industry stemmed from posting fashion content on YouTube—where he showcased his personal style and daily life in Tokyo—Ijima has now amassed a sizeable following of close to 80,000 subscribers on his channel and 100,000 on Instagram. His latest brainchild, Vuja Dé, is a conscious fashion label that reimagines vintage silhouettes with contemporary details that builds on design sensibility.

Vuja Dé's autumn/winter 2022 collection looks at the regression of flowers as a metaphor for natural wear on a garment over time.

Shares Ijima of the motivation behind starting his brand: "There was the innate drive to create something that is not typically considered fashion. My aim was to create an anti-fashion label with no excess waste to promote sustainable fashion and reduce overconsumption." Attributing his root of inspiration to be his affinity with those close to him, Ijima remarks: "My inspiration behind Vuja Dé was birthed from relationships. Real-life experiences and finding a meaning behind clothing."

A quick glance at the label's autumn/winter 2022 collection—titled Postdecayism—and the prevalent luxury and streetwear influences are evident to all. Crushed nylon tracksuits, French terry hoodies and denim jackets feature the slouchy silhouette made popular by Demna Gvasalia's Balenciaga, sporting a cropped body with accommodating shoulders and sleeves. Intentional distressing done by hand, hardware streaked with marks of patina and understated sun-fading throughout the garments proved the devil was in the details. "We follow the Japanese ethos of *mono no aware*, which is the beauty of impermanence and empathy towards transient life," elaborates Ijima.

> "There was the *innate drive to create* something not *typically considered fashion.*"

Dating back to its beginnings in 2019, the brand has seen multiple remodellings and change in its creative direction. Ijima prioritises adapting to change and switching things up, which prevents stagnation. "I believe sticking to one formula leads to a lazy design language. I guess if people ask me what Vuja Dé's current direction is, my answer would be 'a reflection of you'."

Speaking on the inspiration behind the label's latest collection, Ijima looks to the allure and sense of tranquillity that flora invokes. "We used flowers as a visual metaphor for the natural wear-and-tear of garments over time. Originally inspired by the movie *Annihilation*—where plants and flowers are portrayed as foreign and distorted—our team explored multiple plant dyes and related dye-processing techniques to accurately depict the narrative of the collection."

The ideation and creative process for the latest collection was not an effortless one, however, and saw many ideas being bounced off one another as a basis for the collection was steadily birthed. With Vuja Dé being helmed by a core team of five members—Ijima (creative director), a business manager, logistics manager and two designers—external help in the form of experts from related fields was required. Ijima lauds the conscientiousness of everyone who was involved in the project. "Botanists helped with set design and colour theory, florists worked tirelessly on the set arrangement, and master artisans were the backbone of many of our production processes."

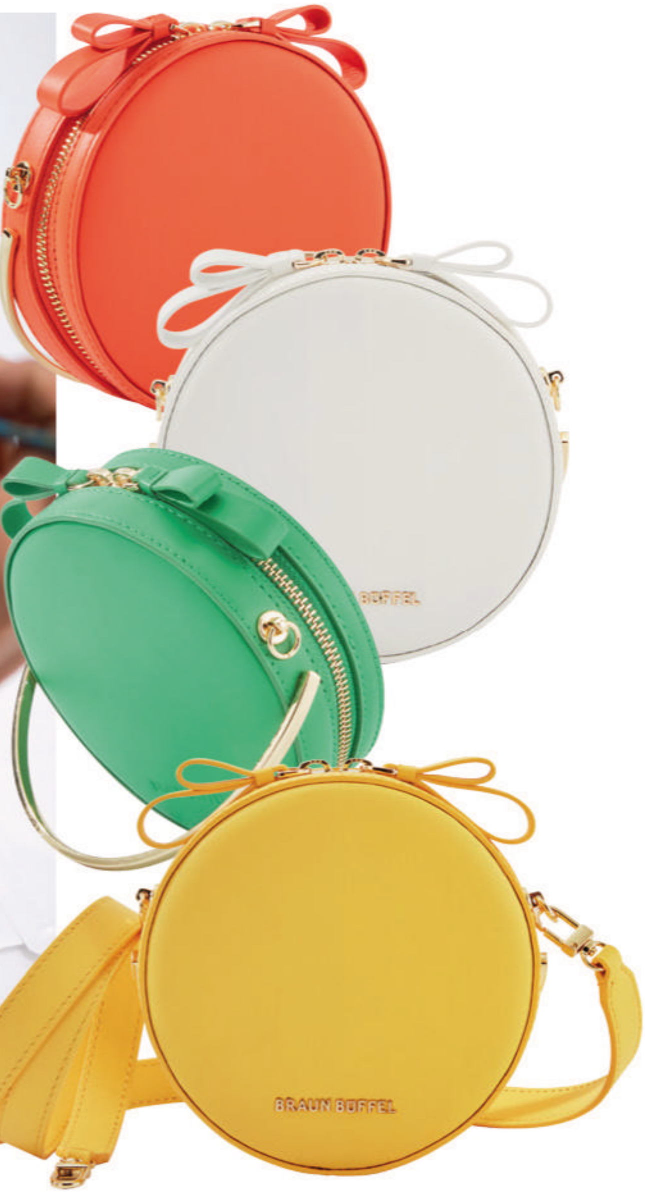
Sustainability has always been at the forefront as well. "We utilise a combination of organic and renewed/sustainable fabrics; two of our past collections feature hoodies constructed of a fabric knitted entirely out of recycled plastic bottles." There is also strong emphasis on supporting local businesses as ongoing partnerships with ethical Japanese tanning factories and denim mills prove.

In addition to sustainable manufacturing processes, the brand does not follow the fashion week cycle nor fixed release dates. "We like to have a close-knit community. Our products are intended for customers who are eager to purchase the very few drops we do every year," Ijima explains.

As for what's next, Ijima aims to push the sustainability aspect of Vuja Dé further, through exclusive projects and unhackneyed collaborations. He is concurrently looking to expand the reach of his label organically. "We want to shift towards a wider market both domestically and internationally, while not deterring from the mission which is to simply create." The future for Vuja Dé seems bright, and its everlasting pursuit to challenge consumer norms within fashion should enrapture everyone. ●

IMAGES COURTESY OF VUJA DÉ

Reinterpreted in white Nappa leather, Braun Büffel's Kath bag served as a blank canvas for artists to create on.



Blank CANVAS

Braun Büffel launches Kath, a youthful reinterpretation of an archival staple, and invites artists to have fun with it.

Words CARMEN SIN

Braun Büffel, the German leather house renowned for its timeless, classic bags, is shaking things up. In April, it launched the Kath bag.

A redesign of an archival staple, it comes in a fetching, trim circle, a little larger than small. At rest, atop its round body, the trimmings of its two zips resemble two halves of a bow, imbuing the bag with the cute charisma of a gift box. But its sensibility is far from quaint. Surprisingly modular, its versatile straps mean the bag may be carried in three ways: as a shoulder bag, a clutch and a top-handle carry. The handle also carries a secret whimsy; thin and stiff, it can double as a stand, propping up the body of the bag so that it assumes the shape of a vintage tabletop vanity mirror—a delicious tribute to its roots.

In keeping with its modern classic air, the colour palette is fresh and bold, featuring duo-toned beauties of mustard-and-tan and emerald-and-black with a pop of orange. Amid this energetic mix, one stands out: a single snow-white option. To celebrate the launch of Kath, a limited quantity was produced in all-white Nappa. This pristine base became the blank canvas onto which local artists were invited to bring their visions to life.

At a launch party meets art jam jointly hosted by *Vogue* Singapore on a bright Thursday afternoon in April, creatives gathered to paint, bead and embellish their blank Kaths in any way they liked; for the Kath, a quirky reimagining of an old favourite, is at its heart a celebration of creative expression.

The guest list included some of the trendiest local artists. Alvin Tan of Phunk went with zesty acrylics, turning his Kath canvas into a dashing landscape of pink, orange and baby blue. Tiffany Lovage took a more graphic approach: with a fine nib, she painted an intricate whirling pattern on hers. On display were past works by *Vogue* Singapore's collaborators, including one bearing a terracotta statuette of an ancient female goddess sculpted by Eduardo Enrique and a flamboyant floral number by multimedia artist Aeropalmics.

Customers will get to join in the fun too. For a limited time and a price of $499, customers will be able to customise their Kath bags as well, on bases of Optic White, Yellow Freesia, Setting Sun or Farm Green. Custom pieces by the artists will also be on display across Braun Büffel stores from the end of May. ●

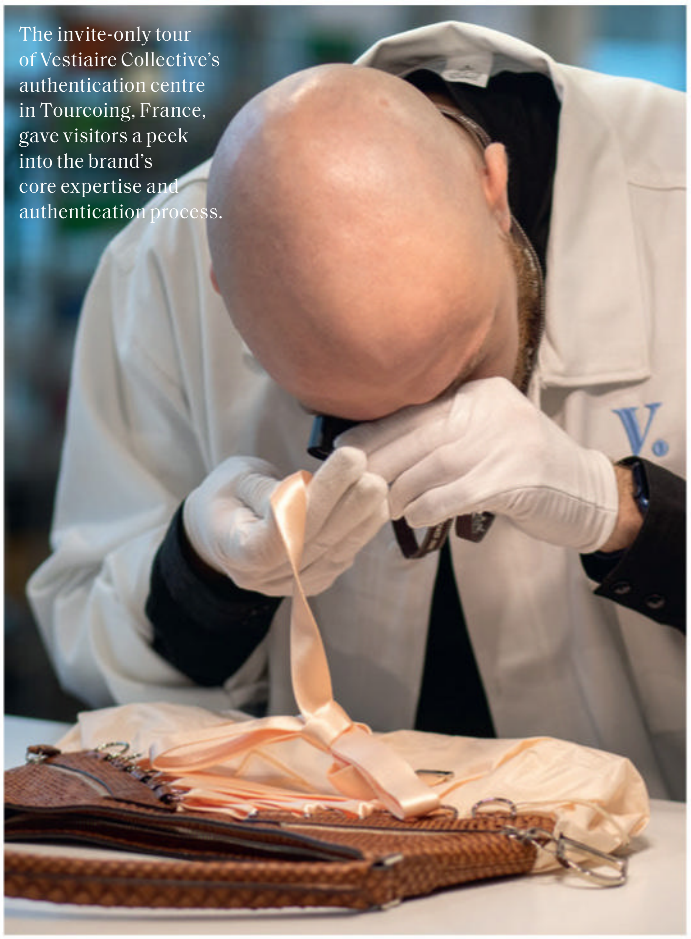
IMAGES COURTESY OF BRAUN BÜFFEL

TRUST *Fall*

Relive the Trust trip by **Vestiaire Collective** in Tourcoing, France, as Victoire Boyer Chammard—head of authentication—delves into the brand's verification process and expertise.

Words BRYAN HO

In March, luxury second-hand marketplace Vestiaire Collective opened its historical warehouse to the fashion press and influencers in an exclusive invite-only excursion. The contemporary e-tailer—now backed by Kering—primarily sells pre-loved designer clothing and accessories worldwide. Its equitable prices and wide selection of designers ranging from luxury powerhouses to smaller independent labels has resulted in its tremendous popularity boost over the last few years.



The invite-only tour of Vestiaire Collective's authentication centre in Tourcoing, France, gave visitors a peek into the brand's core expertise and authentication process.

Held in Tourcoing, France—where the Trust authentication facility is located—the tour provided an interactive experience for visitors to peek into the brand's core expertise and authentication process. Within the tour was an introduction to Vestiaire Collective's team of experts, followed by a rundown of the authentication facility and a workshop that allowed guests a personalised experience of the company's inspection process.

The authentication workshop was hosted by Victoire Boyer Chammard, the head of authentication at Vestiaire Collective. Boyer Chammard—whose expertise stems from a background in auctioning—has been with the brand since its conception, and was one of the first experts in charge of authentication. Shares Boyer Chammard of what makes Vestiaire Collective stand out among its competitors: "Our authentication process is different and unique because we were pioneers in creating this new service and the trust from our customers has been a priority since the launch of the platform. We wanted to be a reliable and trustworthy platform as there were no other options available. It became a top priority across our different channels, from delivering the right products to building a trusted community of buyers and sellers."

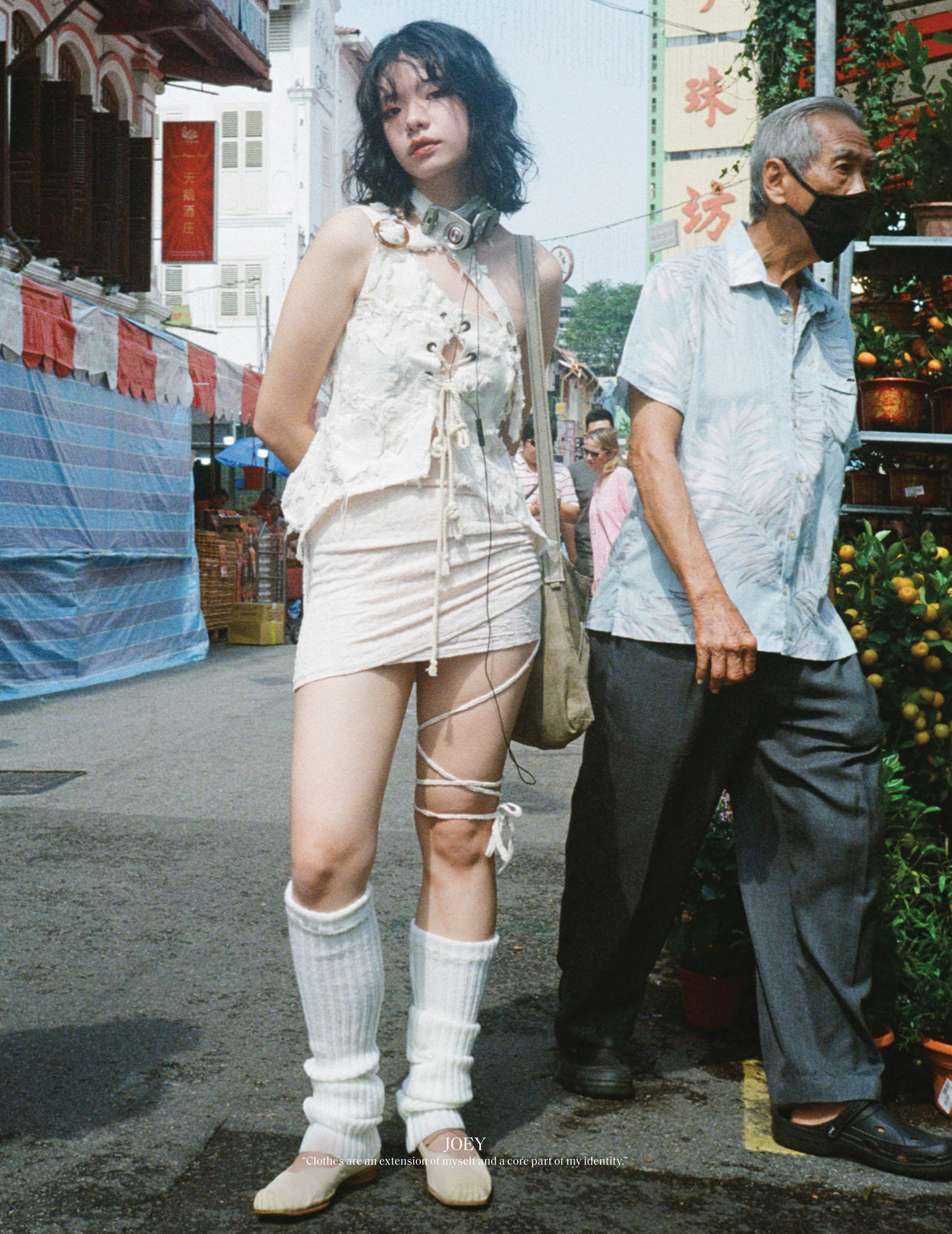
Currently, Vestiaire Collective has five warehouses and boasts a sizeable team of more than 80 authenticators. There are centres in the UK, US, Hong Kong, South Korea and the primary facility in France. The increase in warehouses has sped up operations and allowed the brand to localise its expertise. "We also built our own training programme—The Vestiaire Academy—in-house, to keep up with new trends, models and continuously learn techniques to anticipate the counterfeits of tomorrow," elaborates Boyer Chammard.

Boyer Chammard explains the steps that go into authenticating a product. "Our first filter is digital authentication. If an item is considered non-compliant with our criteria, a human will then proceed to verify its authenticity. Then, physical verification is done by our team of experts. This is important because the expertise is based on specific knowledge and a rigorous verification of the item. From the quality of an engraving and its materials to the shape and smell of an item, it requires a human's senses."

After the pre-loved item is authenticated, it is placed in the hands of the quality control team. "This team does a final check to make sure the item is in good condition and matches the description and pictures from the platform before the item is shipped to the buyer in eco-conscious packaging," highlights Boyer Chammard. The rigorous training that goes into becoming an authentication expert is ever-expanding, with the constant incorporation of new materials, techniques and brands. "This elaborate process has continued to develop and improve thanks to our growing community. We also ensure strong buyer confidence because you will get a full refund if you receive a counterfeit item."

Vestiaire Collective also prides itself on being at the forefront of sustainability within luxury fashion. Remarks Boyer Chammard: "Brands are more open today than before on this subject, which proves an increasing commitment from all fashion players to put sustainability and circularity first. It also shows their faith in us as a real actor in the fight against counterfeits." ●

IMAGE COURTESY OF VESTIAIRE COLLECTIVE



JOEY

"Clothes are an extension of myself and a core part of my identity."

Style MAVENS

Lensed by **Joseph Koh**, Damnsel spotlights the authoritative female creatives who are using their sartorial wisdom to control their self-representation.

Words KELLY KHUA Edit BRYAN HO

NATALIE

"My style empowers me to not hide myself. Dress how you want, not to please anyone else."

FARAH

"Wear what makes you feel good at any moment and be unbothered by external views."

For 24-year-old Singaporean photographer Joseph Koh, *Damnsel* is a visual compendium that documents the unique fashion styles of over 50 women and femme-identifying individuals in Singapore today. Citing Chikashi Suzuki and Shoichi Aoki as influences, Koh's photos depict how fashion is a visual language for self-expression and autonomy. Be it handcrafted accessories or culturally significant belongings, *Damnsel*'s personalities are pictured in eclectic ensembles that reflect their identities.

Among *Damnsel*'s stylish cognoscenti, a common sensibility is a preference for nonconformity, fluidity and experimentation. For Farah Sudiro, Celine Lam (who also goes by Blue) and Natalie Dykes, whose manner of dressing is "free-form" and "ever-changing", clothing expresses their personalities and boosts their confidence. Having a personal style, according to former fashion student Zhong Zhe Han, involves a journey of self-reflection and exploration that is connected to her self-esteem and beliefs. Similarly, Joey Oh and Myo Thet Hnin believe that finding one's taste is more important than copying trends and yielding to others' opinions. Being in control of one's image is also necessary in the eyes of Loo Wen Xin, a 26-year-old photographer who finds empowerment and agency in her sartorial choices. "Finding clothes that fit me the way I want is hard, so whenever I get to be in them, I'm more confident. Nevertheless, I often feel the need to be on guard and it's still a struggle, especially with the industry I'm in. Women tend to be sexualised and criticised for our appearance."

When creating his images, Koh highlights that his priorities were two-fold: the subjects' gaze is aimed directly towards the camera as though confronting viewers and the outfits had to be true to themselves. Shoots took place at various public spaces around Singapore over eight months, and Koh and his team would notice how passers-by often looked at the subjects with curious expressions or judgement. Koh deliberately included them in several images to show how the subjects remain confident, unfazed by unwanted attention. ●

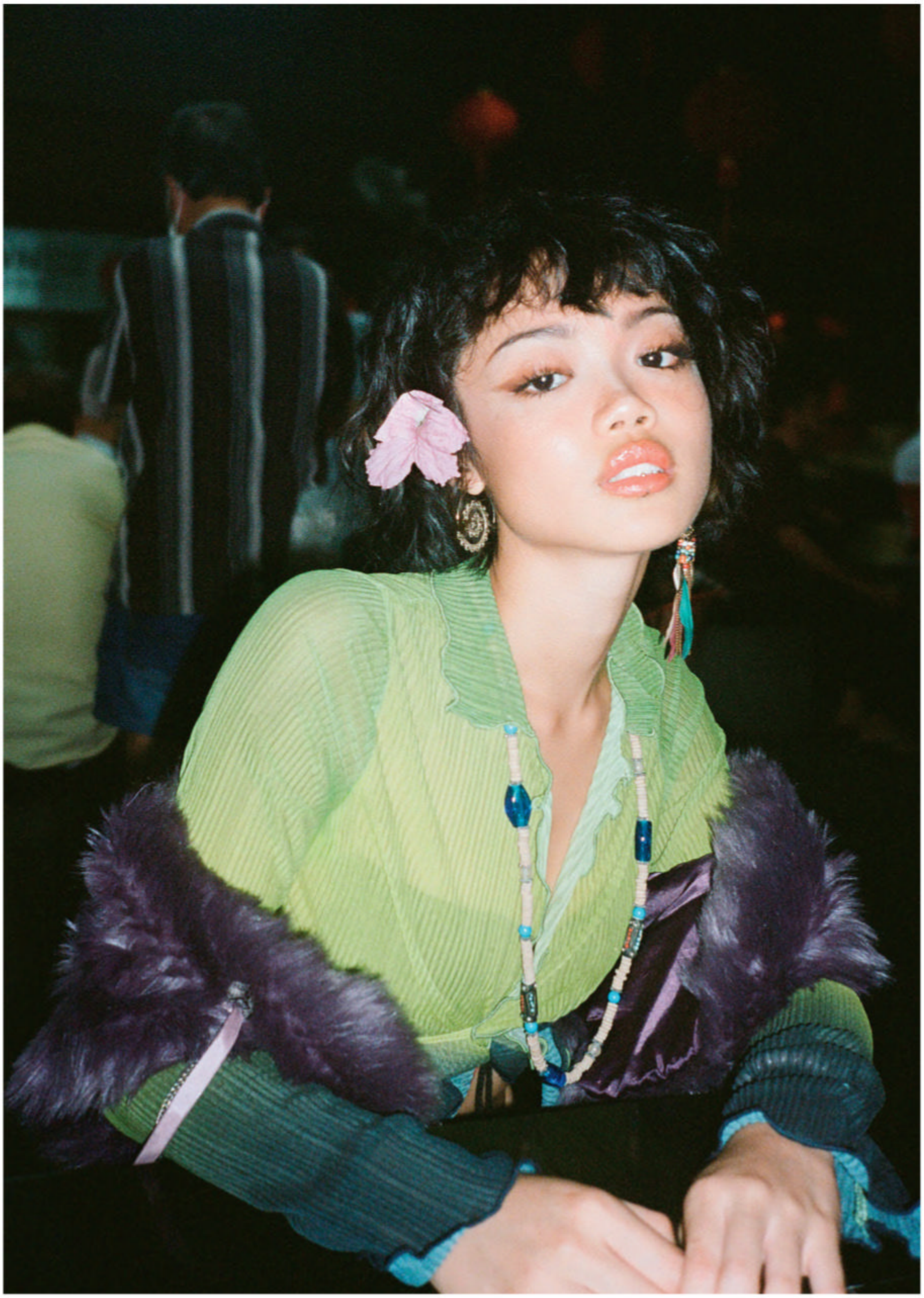
Koh's self-published book, Damnsel *is available for purchase via @badsoju on Instagram*

ZHE HAN

“Embracing the chaos within ourselves is essential for creativity and growth.”

WEN XIN

“Women are often criticised based on what we wear, but my style is where I have my own say.”



SOPHIA

"My mannerisms mould the style that I wear for each day."

CELINE/BLUE
"What I wear is my armour, a way to project my values."

…IGHTS 傳統小吃
茶叶蛋
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STE…
PEA…

MYO

“Style is not determined by what clothes others are buying but how you wear yours.”

Stylist’s assistants, production assistants and casting: Zheng Jialei (Derma), Justin Neo and Ryan Lee. Special thanks: Misc Management

L'IMMENSITÉ
LOUIS VUITTON

Creating INFINITY

From pumpkins to florals, marvel at the whimsical creations of **Louis Vuitton** and **Yayoi Kusama**'s second emblematic launch of accessories and perfumes.

Words MAYA MENON

There are few things that are as instantly recognisable as the saturated, bold and intense markings of avant-garde artist and cultural icon Yayoi Kusama. Born in Matsumoto, Japan, in 1929, Kusama travelled the world with her craft and found herself in places such as Tokyo and New York. Her whimsical and magical creations—often depicted by a repetition of motifs such as polka dots—first melded with the world of French luxury *maison* Louis Vuitton in 2012. A natural fit—after all, the founder's grandson Gaston-Louis Vuitton was an art maven who frequently collaborated with and commissioned artists—Kusama worked alongside the *maison* as it tapped some of the world's biggest contemporary artists, from Jeff Koons to Richard Prince. Most notable from the 2012 collection is a hand-painted Louis Vuitton trunk that featured Kusama's emblematic paintings.

Fast forward 11 years and this colliding of universes is just as prominent within the world of fashion. Case in point: Louis Vuitton's launch of its collaboration with Kusama at the cruise 2023 show in San Diego. Leading up to the brand's first drop with the artist on 6 January this year, visitors were treated to an array of unique creations. The first instalment of the collection encompassed womenswear and menswear pieces, segmented into ready-to-wear, accessories, trunks and fragrances. House icons such as the Monogram Bum Bag, Sac Plat, Capucines and Keepall featured Kusama's blooms, enlarged to engulf the bags in their glory. These motifs also found themselves on ready-to-wear, from silk twill pyjama suiting to lush cashmere knits. Louis Vuitton didn't leave out the details, either. Installations such as 'Narcissus Garden' and 'Infinity Mirror Rooms' were the basis for various accessories.

Now in its second drop, the covetable collection focuses on a few new motifs from the 94-year-old artist, which launched on 31 March. Titled 'Creating Infinity', this iteration of the collaboration moves on from Kusama's dotted motifs and focuses on equally popular themes, such as pumpkins, florals and faces. First on most people's lips was the pumpkin bag—a frequent talisman in Kusama's artworks—drenched in Louis Vuitton's monogram. The piece, which manifests itself in the form of a three-dimensional squash, is a nod to the artist's lauded sculpture on Naoshima Island. For those who prefer a more understated piece from Kusama, peruse the Speedy Boston and Capucines bags, both of which feature intricate yet vivid floral embroideries and appliques. And finally, childlike characters from Kusama's *My Eternal Soul* series find their way in both embroidery and prints on canvases of luxurious Taurillon leather. This is further brought to life through the lens of famed photographer Steven Meisel, featuring celebrities such as Justin Timberlake, Hoyeon Jung and Lea Seydoux. ●

The second drop of the Louis Vuitton x Yayoi Kusama collaboration is available at Louis Vuitton stores islandwide.

IMAGES COURTESY OF LOUIS VUITTON

First launched on 6 January this year, Louis Vuitton x Yayoi Kusama's coveted collection sees a second drop which focuses on the 94-year-old artist's lauded motifs.

Beating HEART

Gucci unveils its latest line of Gucci Bamboo 1947 bags, where heritage elements are reimagined with a contemporary twist.

Words CARMEN SIN

Hear ye, hear ye, Gucci is back with a new line of bamboo-handled bags. The latest collection strikes a fine balance: modish yet classic with shapes that are refined and colours, eclectic. The new palette is wide-ranging and the usual suspects—tan, white and black—sit alongside vivid alternatives: tangerine, emerald, marigold and a holographic silver, among others. As always, the historic top-handle purse is available in medium, small and mini sizes. This iteration is the first to feature interchangeable shoulder straps, every bag comes with two: a plain-coloured leather number, thin and muted, and a larger one in Gucci's emblematic red and green striped pattern. The latter, instantly recognisable, is a departure from the typically logo-less aesthetic of the line.

But for all the bells and whistles, the bamboo handle remains the beating heart of the collection. Since 1947—when the first bamboo handle appeared atop a pigskin purse—the mixed material bags have been a hit. The iconic handle was born of austerity. In post-war Italy, production ran into the wall of rationing; leather was scarce and the house needed an alternative. Designer Guccio Gucci looked east and found bamboo. More grass than wood, the material was abundant in Japan and could be affordably imported. When roasted, unblemished bamboo turns a lovely chestnut and yields a gorgeous, mellow marbling. To make the first Bamboo bag, known then by the humble moniker 0633, Gucci's team of Florentine artisans manipulated the material by hand; first, burning it to bend into rounded handles, then lacquering and toasting it to perfection. It was an aesthetic and scientific achievement—the technology remains under Gucci's patent and latter-day handles are still made the same way, painstakingly crafted by skilled artisans.

The bags quickly gained fans, particularly in film. It made its cinematic debut on the arm of Ingrid Bergman in *Viaggio in Italia* (1954), paired with a matching bamboo-handle umbrella. It also appeared in two Michelangelo Antonioni films, *Le Ameche* (1955) and, more than a decade later, on Vanessa Redgrave in *Blow-Up* (1966). Thirty years on, its cultural impact reached royal heights when the bamboo tote became a favourite of Princess Diana.

Perhaps its popularity has endured because the house has never forgotten its heritage. The line was renamed Gucci Bamboo 1947 and craftsmanship of its bamboo hardware remains non-negotiable, even in the age of mass production. As the house puts it, it's like "carrying a piece of history". ●

Introduced in 1947, Gucci's bamboo handle remains an integral design element, as seen in the latest Gucci Bamboo 1947 bags.

IMAGES COURTESY OF GUCCI

The new Coach Play Singapore Shophouse is a seamless blend of innovation and heritage, celebrating the house's bountiful history.

PLAYTIME

A reimagination of the brand's New York spirit, the new **Coach** Play Singapore Shophouse offers customers an immersive and experiential retail experience.

Words BRYAN HO

Coach has been lauded by many for its timeless wardrobe staples that pay homage to New York tradition. Founded in 1941 by six artisans, it started out as an authoritative leather workshop before transforming into a model reflection of American freedom and individuality.

In a seamless blend of traditional and contemporary tropes, Coach announced the opening of Coach Play Singapore Shophouse on Keong Saik Road. The bespoke concept space is the first of its kind in Asia—and also the largest globally, spanning over 4,000 square feet—and offers a unique consumer experience on each of its three levels. The entrance features a luminous visual display of Coach's latest campaigns. Past that is a seasonal space sprawling with the latest leather good offerings, led by the iconic Tabby bag in its myriad of colourways. A wide array of other bags like the Luna shoulder bag and small wallets are also up for grabs.

Also on the ground floor is the *crème de la crème* of the Shophouse—Coach's own cafe. The menu is a collaboration with local cafe Brawn & Brains Coffee, with signature items such as classic pancakes with maple syrup, homemade *kaya* and mixed berries jam and a *gula* Melaka milkshake, melding Big Apple favourites with distinctive Singaporean flavours.

Head up a flight of stairs to browse ready-to-wear offerings and coveted vintage gems that are only available here, sourced and restored by Coach's craftsmen in New York to give them a second life. Unlike most vintage sales that are temporary and limited, this is a permanent feature within the Shophouse. A craftsmanship bar allows visitors to customise their purchased bag with various pins and patches through the Coach Create service, while a mirror room with LED display on the top floor—dubbed Coach World—provides a surreal viewing experience as it dispenses a tale of the house's heritage and craft legacy. With its focus on celebrating community, Coach Play Shophouse is a place for everyone to foster lasting, meaningful relationships. ●

Coach Play Singapore Shophouse at 5 Keong Saik Road opens daily from 10am to 10pm. Coach Café opens from Monday to Sunday (except Wednesdays). The day menu is available from 9am to 3pm and the dessert bar is available from 6pm to 9pm.

IMAGES COURTESY OF COACH

LURE *of the* LOOM

Without warning or precedent, weavers have appeared in Singapore. One writer discovers how they came to be, why they weave and the infinite richness of the craft.

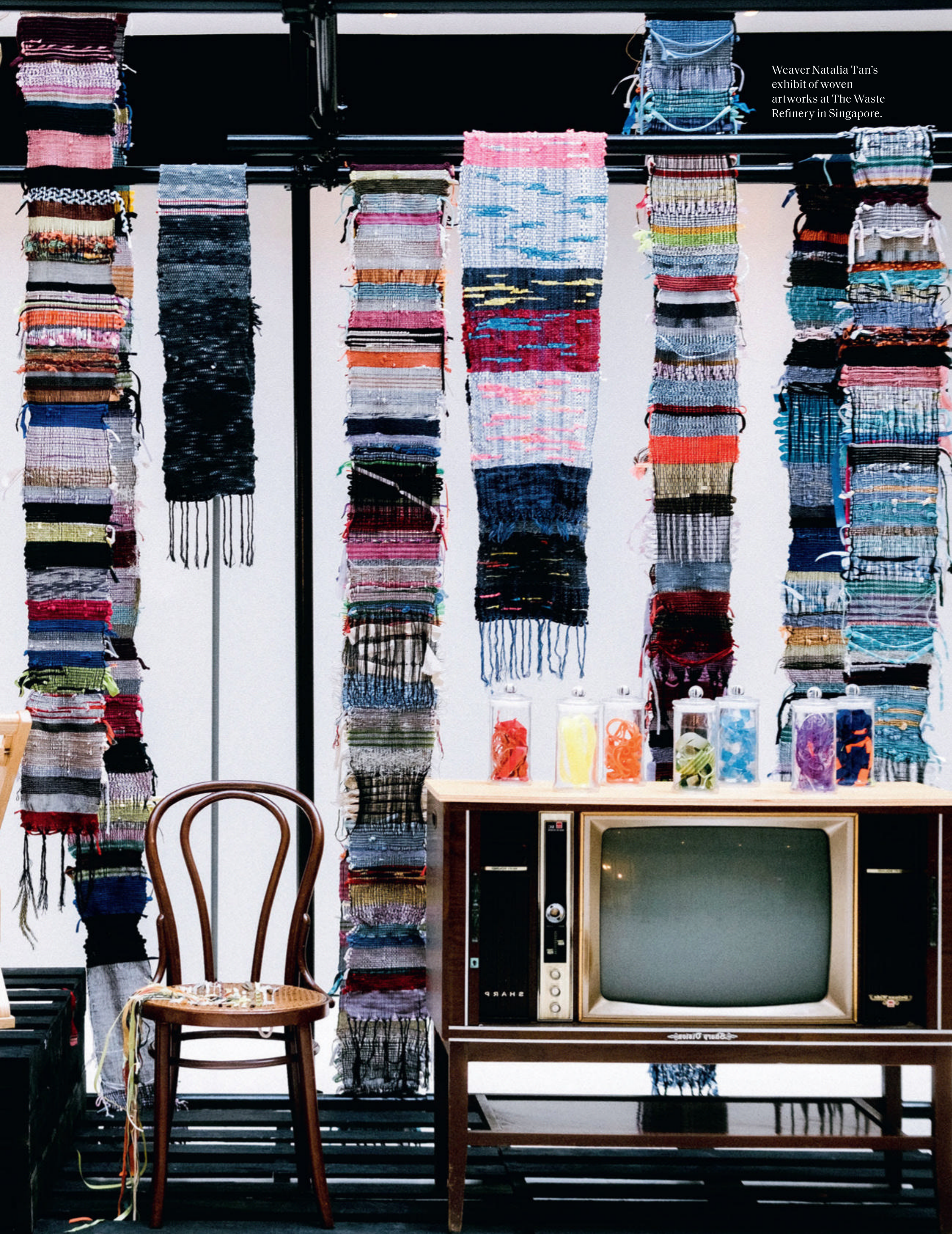
Words CARMEN SIN

A large loom dwells in the corner of Lynelle Barrett's living room. Of Swedish make, its stirring frame of pine and inscrutable guts of 'shaft, heddle and weft' sit like a pet dragon on the hearth—a reminder that to loom is also a verb. On it, Barrett, 59, has threaded the pattern for some cheery dishcloths. She is a weaver, part of a small but distinct community that has sprung up in Singapore. With yarn, looms and a rare gift for patience, these weavers have devoted themselves to the ancient craft of cloth-making. But their idyllic vocation conceals a secret defiance: they aren't supposed to be here.

A cursory glance at history unearths the dearth of local weaving traditions. "I think there were rattan weavers once," says Natalia Tan, weaver, artist and enigma, eyes wide with the effort of recollection, "but they died and faded into obscurity." She doesn't mention the indigenous Orang Laut, who wove *bubu* traps to catch fish. Of their ilk, only three living practitioners remain. Besides, neither set bothered with textiles. The stark void is rare. Almost every other culture has been weaving for millennia, moved first by necessity and later, art. Singapore, which began as a port city, seemingly resisted both and for the most part has operated on a principle of pristine indifference. As recently as 10 years ago, there were no weavers. Now, we have two schools, while our metropolitan cousins, Hong Kong and Kuala Lumpur, still tarry at zero.

At the centre of this unlikely flourishing is a tight-knit guild of women. In 2018, two of them—Koh Chen Chen, 41, and Goh Hui Lian, 46—founded Craft Atelier, the first weaving studio on our shores and the backbone of the local community. The coterie also includes Autumn Brown, 36, who opened the second studio, Barrett, and Tan, 32. The latter two conduct guerrilla demonstrations, planting their looms in public spaces for anyone to try. These five women are now surrounded by at least 1,000 recorded acolytes, based on registration data from Craft Atelier. Most have passed through the studios; not captured are the roving autodidacts.

And their numbers are only poised to rise. "We are seeing a resurgence of craft," declares Brown. Barrett is more specific. She touts our milieu as the second coming of the arts and crafts movement, a "knee-jerk" reaction to the chill of digitisation. Koh corroborates: "At the start, we used to get mostly mothers, now we get children, young women, retirees, even men."


SHARP
Sharp Vision

Weaver Natalia Tan's exhibit of woven artworks at The Waste Refinery in Singapore.

> “There’s a *human impulse* to make things—not *with our phones*, but with our *hands.*”

THIS PAGE
Madder red yarn threaded on Lynelle Barrett’s loom, shown with dried madder root.

FACING PAGE
FROM LEFT
Sculptural weaving made from fishing line by Tan, courtesy of Natalia Tan.

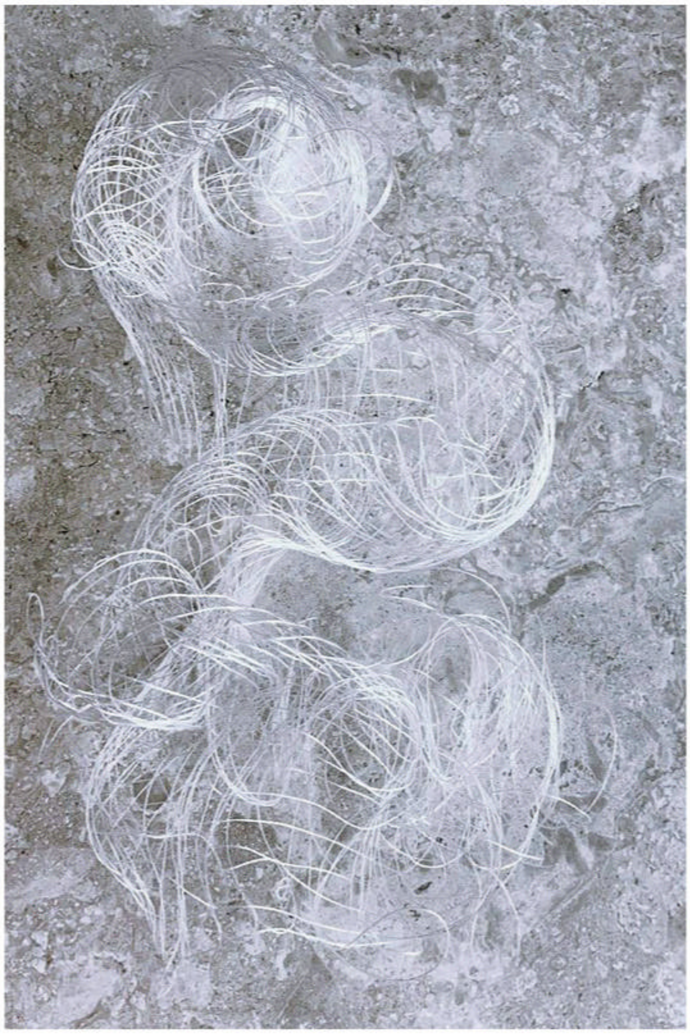
A close up of a woven work by Tan, courtesy of Natalia Tan.

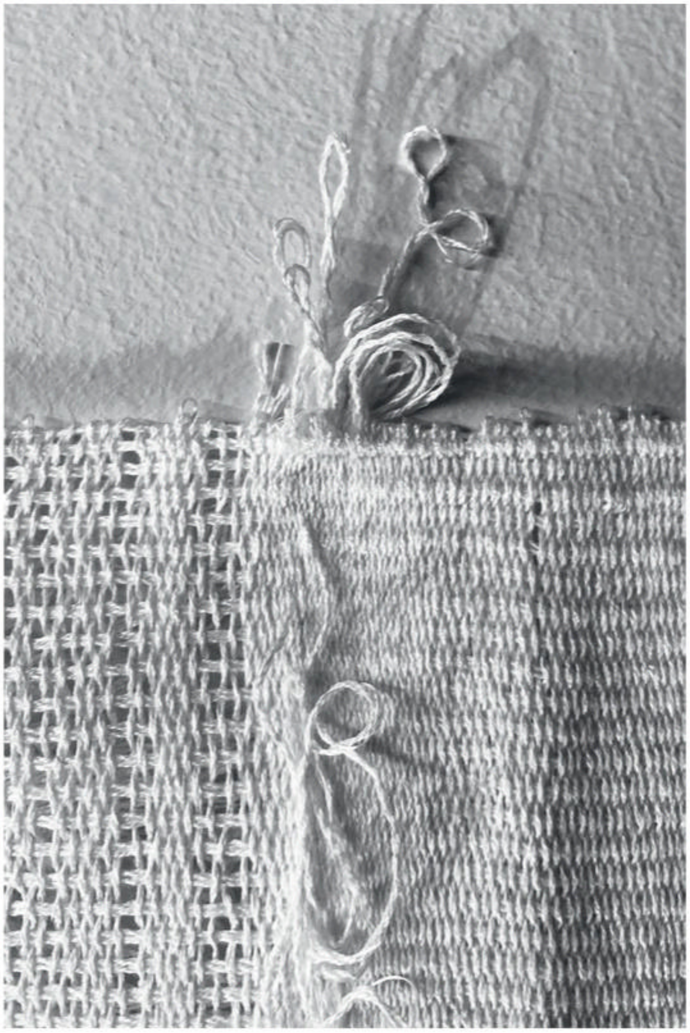
The pioneers first encountered weaving overseas. Barrett was entranced by a Catu weaver in Laos, whom she begged to teach her that very night. Tan trailed a friend to a Saori workshop in rural Osaka, where she weaved “like a monster” for three days straight. The studio founders got their education in the guilds of North America, legacy of a bucolic past.

Still, that is only half the story. Chantelle Lim, 25, a student-turned-teacher, started weaving at 21, first on her own and later under the tutelage of Tan—without leaving the country. She was simply “searching for better fabrics”, she says. (Though a transfixing demonstration at the Asian Civilisations Museum had also been influential.) And then, with a rueful laugh, “I wanted to be a peasant.” The pastoral instinct underpinning this sentiment is echoed by the other women. “There’s a human impulse to make things,” Barrett observes, “not with our phones, but with our hands.” They gesture at a nostalgia for an imagined past: a time when we made things and used the things we made.

Surprisingly, all gush about the enthralling logic of the loom and its hypnotic mathematics. After all, they rush to tell me, “the Jacquard loom was the world’s first computer”. While weaving, the undulating threads of the loom rise and fall in a binary sequence, mechanics that inspired the binary codes of computing. It captivates Koh, who, before her induction, never guessed that something “so structured could be so artistic”.

But most of all, they relish the labour. For Lim, the complex operation of planning, stringing, then executing the pattern is a sweet escape. “You’re using your hands, feet and brain. There’s no time to think about anything else,” she says. Then laughing, adds: “The first time I weaved at Natalia’s I didn’t drink water for four hours. It was mad.” Barrett concurs.





IMAGES COURTESY OF THE WASTE REFINERY, ELENA BOYCE, NATALIA TAN

Her dishcloths would come along a lot faster with a flying shuttle, she informs me, but the work is rewarding.

It's a sensibility that has fallen out of fashion, victim of the grey assembly line. The weavers seem determined to resurrect it, lingering on the charisma of the handmade object. "It has more life," says Barrett, "more thought," says Koh, "more me," says Lim. The desire for the distinctive and individual can extend to every part of production—Lim confesses she once grew her own cotton. She shows me a pair of baby shorts, woven from scratch. It is surprising to touch, soft in places and bumpy in others, where the fabric has bunched or a seed has caught. They are the most poignant shorts I have ever seen and the hems skew slightly uneven. The loveliness of its flaws recalls the words of John Ruskin, whose blistering invectives against 19th-century industrialisation double as accidental odes to craft: "It is not coarse cutting, not blunt cutting, that is necessarily bad, but it is cold cutting—the look of equal trouble everywhere—the smooth, diffused tranquillity of heartless pains."

Imperfection, it surfaces, is a bone of contention among them; some exalt it, others scorn it. Barrett's wyvern loom bears a dark-wood shaft inscribed with an unfurling fern, much like the flawless curlicues of her weave. It is the charm for perfection. Tan has a competing philosophy. A Saori disciple, she weaves by intuition alone. A tearaway school, the first tenet of Saori is an order: consider the difference between man and machine. Tan's *oeuvre* is a riotous landscape of cavorting colours, textures and emotions. Fuchsia jostles with straw; knots, snaggles and bulbs bloom; there are no mistakes. Both schools possess a keen humanity and the tension between them feels familiar—a consequence of warring desires.

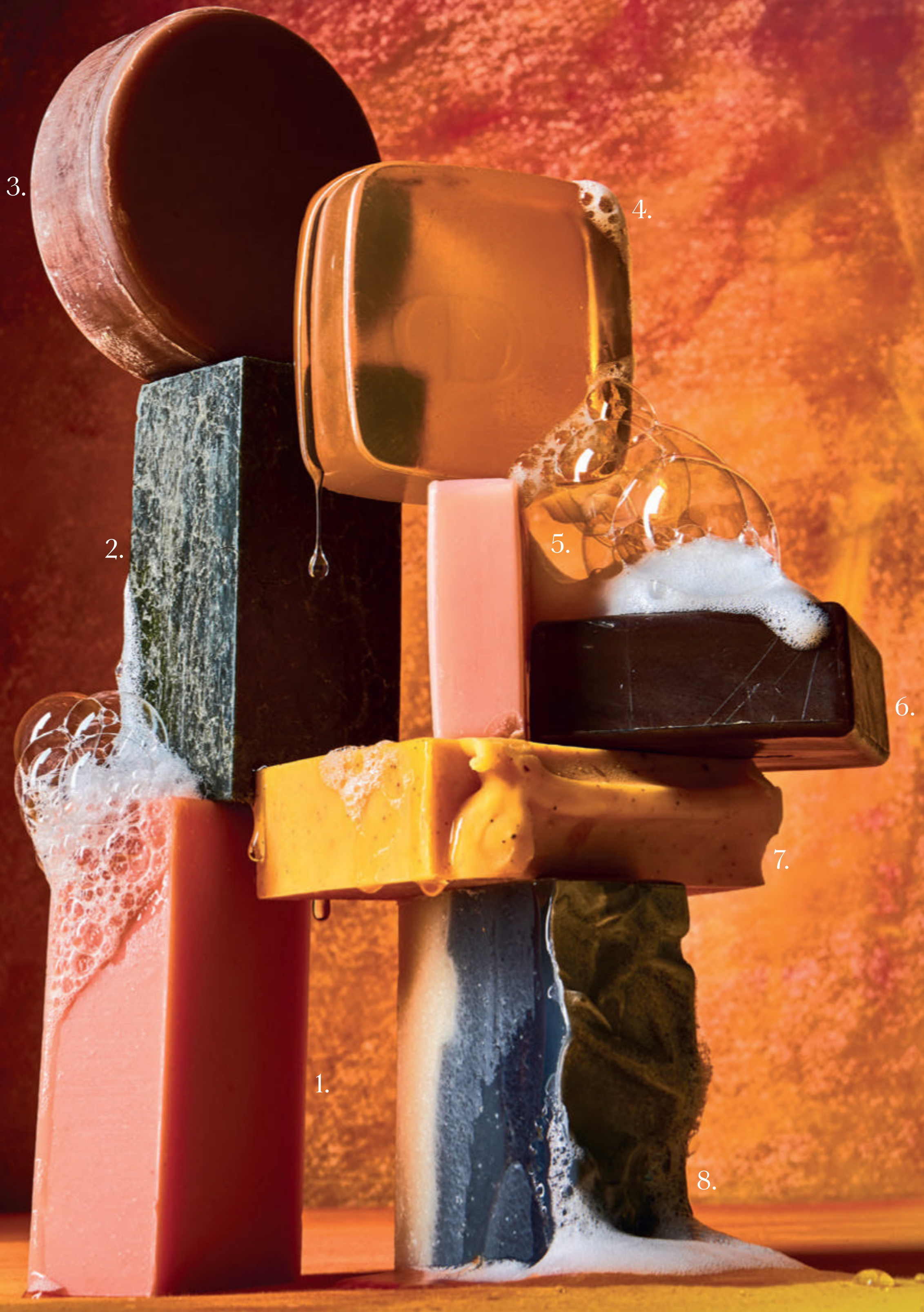
Some differences run deeper still, like a rift between east and west. Asian techniques, Lim says, are more "spiritual, even animist", whereas European techniques are strictly ornamental. Barrett, an American, has spent almost a decade studying Southeast Asian traditions for the same reason. She has steeped herself in Iban culture, making such frequent pilgrimages to Borneo that a local *ikat* weaving collective has taken her in. Known as the dream weavers—for their patterns come to them in dreams—weavers and warriors are of equal status in their society. Their abstract motifs are imbued with cosmic power and Barrett must take care not to attempt certain patterns or risk grave injury. In the North American canon, stakes tend to be more aesthetic.

Nearing the end of my visit to Barrett's atmospheric apartment, she interrupts our patter about the woes of brocade with a sudden aside: "I call myself a textile artist because you've got to differentiate yourself from craft." It is a matter of prestige. "Not because I see it differently," she hastens to add, "but because the world does." The hierarchy, or the world, upsets me, so I bring it up with Lim, who has spent most of our interview supine on her bed. "Yeah," she mumbles, "crafting can sound primitive. It implies you lack vision." "Then would you like to be called an artist?" I ask. "No," she says, with the blithe insouciance of youth, "I don't care." ●

Bar NONE

An eco-conscious beauty regime is within reach thanks to these formidable bar soaps that work for the face, body and scalp.

Photography and styling STUDIO OOOZE Words EMILY HENG



1. *Herbivore Botanicals* Pink Clay Gentle Cleanse Clay Soap Bar, $22 from Sephora
2. *Aromatica* Rosemary Scalp Scaling Shampoo Bar, $36 from Sephora
3. *Fenty Skin* Cocoa Cleans'R Soothing All-Over Cleansing Bar, $21 from Sephora
4. *Dior* Prestige Le Savon Bar Soap, $150
5. *L'Occitane* Cherry Blossom Bath Soap, $9
6. *Sulwhasoo* Herbal Soap, $58 for a pack of two
7. *Mira* Hello Sunshine Soap Bar, $14
8. *Rough Beauty* Ashberry Soap Bar, $11

Beauty DESK

A light touch is all you need. Attaining a flawless canvas is made easy with these skincare innovations and make-up picks that deliver on a budge-proof base and unrivalled radiance.

Words EMILY HENG

1.
GUCCI
ÉTERNITÉ DE BEAUTÉ
2.
LA MER
THE MOISTURIZING SOFT CREAM
LA CRÈME SOYEUSE RÉGÉNÉRATION INTENSE
3.
MAKE UP FOR EVER
4.
dynamic skin retinol serum
high-dose wrinkle serum
sérum rides puissant
0.34 US FL OZ / 10 mL
dermalogica by The International Dermal Institute
5.
TOM FORD

1. Lit-from-within

Hydration and glow are the key tenets of the *Gucci Beauty Eternité de Beauté Foundation*, $105 from Sephora, but that's not to say that it is suited only for dry skin types. Available in 40 hues, the latest entrant to the Gucci Beauty make-up category also incorporates shine control abilities and a velvety, matte-like finish to ensure that it works just as well for oilier complexions. This translates to a healthy sheen that does not oxidise or fade throughout the day, clinging on for over eight hours without flaking or cracking.

2. Silky soft

Transform your skincare regime into a sensorial, sumptuous experience with the *La Mer New Moisturising Soft Cream*, $625 for 60ml. Its vivid floral scent and whipped, creamy texture serve as an olfactory treat; an unparalleled delight for the senses that adds a luxurious touch to even the most mundane of proceedings. The latest iteration differentiates itself from previous renditions with multi-sized moisture spheres that suffuse the skin with the brand's patented youth-regenerating capsules, imparting a brightening and smoothing effect that allows effortless make-up application.

3. One-swipe wonder

Your skin, but better. The *Make Up For Ever HD Skin Powder Foundation*, $72 from Sephora, boasts a lightweight formula that feels virtually undetectable upon application, sinking seamlessly into skin for a blurring and mattifying effect. Pores and imperfections are cleverly concealed without cakiness, offering correction without emphasising skin texture. Equipped with a multifunctional sponge designed to provide high coverage on one side and a sheer wash of colour on the other, its versatility is sure to be a valuable addition to your make-up arsenal.

4. A clean slate

Texture and scarring are made obsolete with the *Dermalogica Dynamic Skin Retinol Serum*, $165; a potent fusion encompassing 3.5 percent retinoid complex and squalene to even out skin texture and tone. Ideal for those looking to give their complexion an overhaul, its formula is designed to provide noticeable results without incurring further sensitivity. This is due to the inclusion of soothing oat-derived beta glucan that bolsters skin resilience and enhances barrier health. Sustained usage leads to a reduction in fine lines and grants glowing skin brimming with health.

5. Glow on the go

Decadence meets convenience with the *Tom Ford Beauty Traceless Soft Matte Concealer*, $102 from Sephora. Housed within a portable stick embellished with glossy gold detailing, it comprises a high-coverage, lightweight formula that camouflages imperfections and hyperpigmentation. Its silky-smooth texture is attributed to the inclusion of skincare ingredients such as hyaluronic acid and vitamin E, which provide ample moisture for up to 12 hours as well as antioxidant protection. To round it all off are transfer-proof and sweat-resistant capabilities that cement Tom Ford's latest complexion offering as one to watch within the beauty space. ●

UN JARDIN
À CYTHÈRE
HERMÈS
PARIS

Un Jardin à Cythère, created by Christine Nagel, astonishes with notes of olive wood, laced with the island's blonde grasses and fresh pistachio.

Christine Nagel, Hermès perfumer.

Fields OF GOLD

A wild garden fragrance that glorifies dry grasses, pistachios and absolutely no flowers? **Hermès** perfumer, Christine Nagel, shares more on her latest astonishing scent.

Words ALLI SIM

Integrity, as they say, is who you are when nobody's watching. As someone who spent many years on the inside at Hermès, I've become somewhat of an intimate accomplice. Much like those 'come as you are' family dinners where you've nothing to prove to anyone, it is fair to say that Hermès—the house and its people—are exactly who they are on the inside as they project to the world: a collective of dreamers, poets and at the very core, craftsmen. Few embody this spirit more than celebrated Hermès perfumer, Christine Nagel.

Years ago, as we sat in a conference room of the Hermès *maison* in Ginza, Tokyo, Nagel uttered a *raison d'être* that still liberates me today. "You have the right to make mistakes." It was a decree that Hermès's sixth-generation artistic director, Pierre-Alexis Dumas, made to her when she joined the house.

Armed with this *carte blanche* to create, Nagel has birthed 22 fragrances, including Un Jardin à Cythère, since becoming the house's perfumer creator in 2014.

"I think it's the most beautiful thing that anyone's ever told me. You have to be bold. Without boldness, there's no creation. You have to, you're allowed to make mistakes," she muses. "He said, 'I prefer if you make mistakes while being bold than making mistakes when following others'."

Fast forward years later to Athens, Greece, where we're discovering Hermès's latest perfume, Un Jardin à Cythère. The scent is inspired by the island of Kythira and in a confident, Nagel-esque move, it is a garden-inspired fragrance that features no flowers. Instead, Un Jardin à Cythère opens with the unbound freshness of wild grasses as lively, solar notes together with creamy, fresh pistachio come forth. "I found it very interesting to be talking about a garden that is not green or a garden with flowers in it. For me, drawing attention to the wild grasses is something that's surprising," she tells me, eyes twinkling behind her signature thick-rimmed glasses.

"I take risks. But risks at Hermès are, for example, to work on a vegetal scent rather than a floral one or to choose ginger for Twilly d'Hermès when you know that caramel notes are more successful. So using dry grass in a perfume is taking a risk. I try to be surprising, just like the house of Hermès can be astonishing."

Fascinated about her creative process, I ask about the role that curiosity plays. "I'm curious by nature and I like life. I think my job is the best job in the world. I'm doing it in the best company in the world, at the most beautiful *maison*, and I'm free in my creations because the house of Hermès allows me to be free in my creations."

It would have been easier to simply churn out another floral fragrance, but Nagel is never one to shy away from a challenge.

A touch of Hermès magic: the house whisked its friends to Greece, creating a day-long agora of delights inspired by the fragrance.

> “This was a *gift*. A *gift* that was *brought to me* by the *wind*. And it was a *different* scent.”

Postcards from Greece

“There’s a French expression which says when you fall in love, you set sail for Kythira. That’s so beautiful. It’s quite a literary expression. ‘I’m setting sail for a wonderful moment of love’,” Nagel shares wistfully. She first visited Kythira, heart of the scent, more than 20 years ago.

“When I arrived, I had this image of olive trees. And just below the trees, you had the wild grasses that were moving with the wind. And this image was absolutely beautiful. I was feeling a lot of emotion under those olive trees because the wind carried with it a very surprising scent, a scent of cereals,” she recounts, describing the wind as a ‘caress’.

Ultimately the encounter “was surprising because, usually, when you’re in a garden, you want to smell something. You have to bend over to smell the roses, to smell the flowers, to smell the leaves. And here, this was a gift. A gift that was brought to me by the wind. And it was a different scent.”

Impressions of Kythira

Until you can get your hands on a bottle of Un Jardin à Cythère, Nagel is happy to initiate us to the scent.

Unable to travel during global COVID restrictions, Nagel poetically composed her impressions of Kythira entirely by memory. She sniffed an olive wood chalice for reference and fresh pistachios which are totally different from the dry pistachios as we know them. Fresh pistachios are moist and tender, according to Nagel, lending the perfume a velvet aspect.

“For me, it’s quite fresh in the beginning and this is something I was looking for. In Greece, you can feel the strength of this wind. At the same time, there’s this freshness and this citrus smell. Then you move on to the grass and the cereal notes, which are more regressive. When it rains in Greece, you see that the grass begins to go green again. This grass has fallen asleep. It’s not dead, it’s still there, it’s living, but it has fallen asleep. A little bit of rain and it starts all over again.”

She continues: “The pistachio is there; you can feel it quite quickly. You apply it on the skin, it’s fresh and at the same time, you feel that your skin is being warmed by the sun. And the olive wood is there, it’s the backbone. At Hermès, you always have this backbone and the olive wood brings this backbone without bringing a woody smell. It makes sure that the perfume is not just soft and shallow.” Naturally, Nagel was unbound by marketing timelines. “It took me almost two years to be ready. The whole duration of the pandemic actually.”

Her first post-pandemic trip was to Greece. “I found it again, I found my garden. And it was an incredible moment of emotion for me because I had worked from memory this whole time. My memory was on the right track.”

Her boss, Pierre-Alexis Dumas, has deep Greek roots. He inhaled the finished work deeply and called it “home”.

“All of a sudden, I’m surprised and I’m astonished,” muses Nagel on her olive wood, pistachio and grass-driven scent. “That’s my work in perfume. I’ve always taken many risks. I like to do different, unexpected things.” ●

REFILL & REPLENISH

As environmental stakes continue to rise, luxe beauty brands walk the line between green and glam, minimising their carbon footprint in the form of refills and sustainable sourcing.

Words ALLI SIM

La Prairie Pure Gold Radiance Nocturnal Balm, $1,500; refill, $1,350 for 60ml
An independent study on the impact of packaging by Netherlands-based research institute, The LCA Centre, revealed that buying a refill saves 70 percent carbon dioxide, 65 percent energy and 45 percent emissions. With this in mind, La Prairie offers refills without compromising on its sensorial packaging or high-performance ingredients. This balm, enhanced with La Prairie's proprietary Pure Gold Diffusion system, coddles fatigued and fragile skin, offering a sense of increased firmness and hydration.

PURE GOLD
RADIANCE NOCTURNAL BALM
la prairie
SWITZERLAND

Kora Organics Berry Bright Vitamin C Eye Cream, $86; refill, $72 for 15ml
Besides using recycled, refillable or biodegradable packaging, Kora also reduces its air freight, electricity and gas in offices, and is commited to the Pace Group, a net-tree positive printing company which plants more trees than it uses. As for this eye cream, it's boosted with 5.5 percent active vitamin C and loaded with Kakadu plum, red ginseng and quinoa peptide to minimise fine lines and wrinkles while hydrating and brightening your peepers.

KORA
ORGANICS
BERRY BRIGHT VITAMIN C EYE CREAM
CRÈME POUR LES YEUX À LA VITAMINE C BERRY BRIGHT

N°1
DE
CHANEL
CRÈME RICHE REVITALISANTE
AU CAMÉLIA ROUGE

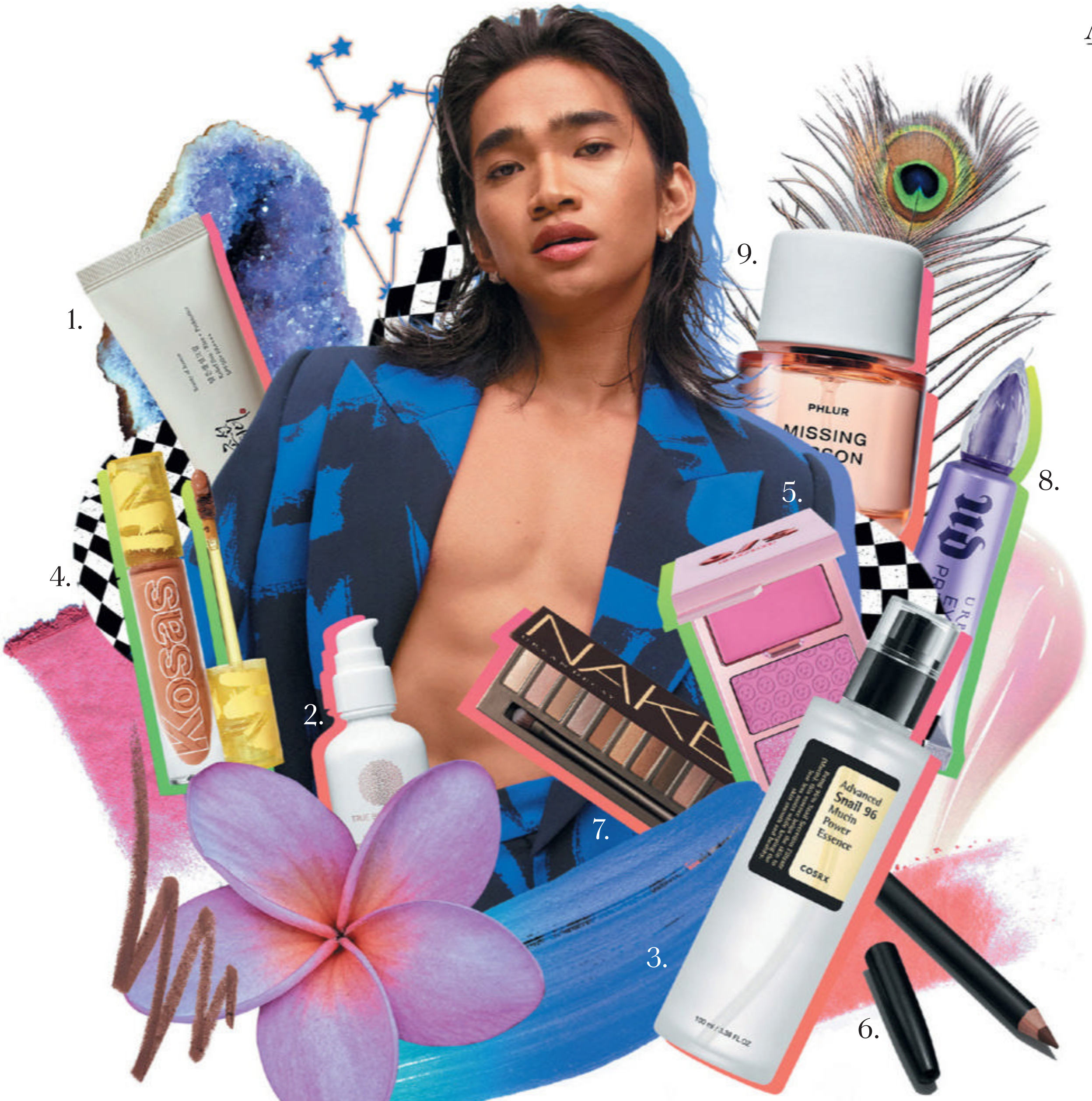
Chanel N°1 de Chanel The Rich Revitalizing Cream, $169; refill, $143 for 50g
N°1 de Chanel is the house's eco-conscious beauty line. The formulas feature up to 97 percent naturally derived ingredients and are housed in eco-designed packaging in bio-based materials from renewable sources. We're talking FSC-certified wood chips that are by-products of industrial excess as well as camellia seed shells. Zooming in on the cream, its concentrated formula amped up by red camellia extract and ceramides helps to reduce the appearance of wrinkles and pores while improving elasticity and radiance.

AB
Augustinus Bader
THE ULTIMATE SOOTHING CREAM
WITH TFC8®
LA CRÈME APAISANTE ABSOLUE
AVEC TFC8®
50 ml℮ 1.7 fl. oz.

Augustinus Bader The Ultimate Soothing Cream, $440; refill, $415 for 50ml
This ultra-rich cream contains Augustinus Bader's proprietary TFC8 or Trigger Factor Complex, which comprises more than 40 sustainably sourced ingredients and is the culmination of 30 years of research and clinical study. The cream provides immediate relief against inflammation, rebuilding elasticity and the skin barrier for a healthier, resilient complexion.

clé de peau
BEAUTÉ
CRÈME FORTIFIANTE INTENSIVE
INTENSIVE FORTIFYING CREAM

Clé de Peau Beauté Intensive Fortifying Cream, $210; refill, $190 for 50ml
Clé de Peau Beauté has been offering refillable products for decades. The brand balances its green objective with rigorously selected recycled packaging materials and sustainably sourced ingredients that also stay true to its luxe feel and high safety standards. But it's also what's on the inside that counts, and to undo the look of damage caused by time and environmental stress, this defensive night cream encourages brighter, stronger skin that's less prone to wrinkles.



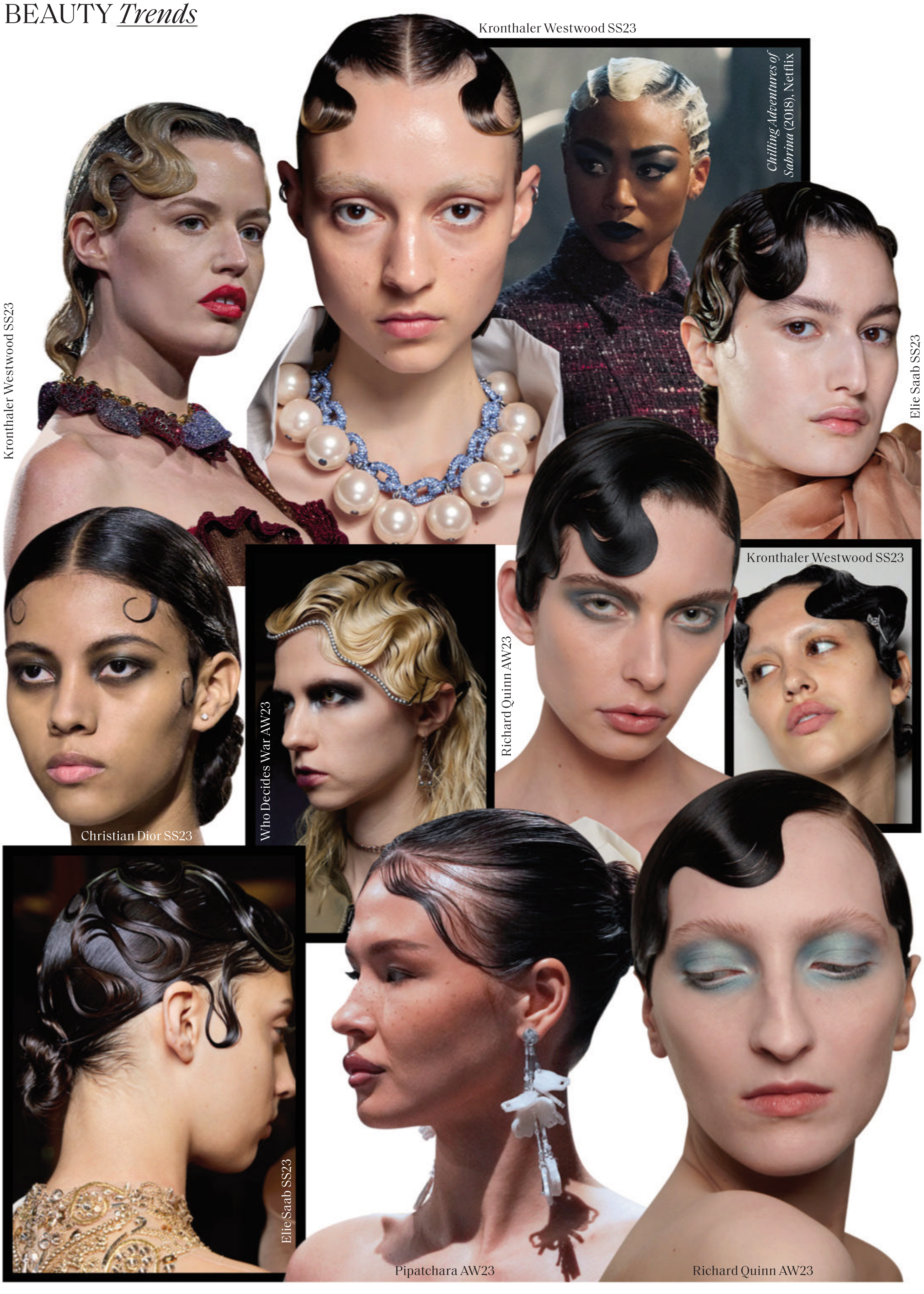
BRETMAN ROCK

From breaking down beauty barriers to empowering his viewers, this influencer and new author's unbridled confidence and fierce individuality makes him an icon in his own right. Here, he shares his favourite beauty products, self-care routine, mantra and more.

Collage SOFIA COPE Words VERITY CHENG

Talk about your new book *You're That Bitch* This is a love letter to the younger me, Bretman Pebble and a way for my audience to get to know me more intimately. It's inspired by my journal essays and things that I've learnt throughout the first quarter of my life. **1, 2 & 3. Top skincare products** My go-to products are sunscreen, sunscreen and sunscreen. I'm an island boy from the Philippines and Hawaii so I'm picky with my sunscreen. My favourite chemical sunscreen is Sun Relief from *Beauty of Joseon* and my favourite physical sunscreen is the *True Botanicals* Skin Barrier Sun Shield SPF 30. I also enjoy the *Mario Badescu* Cleansing Oil and *CosRX* Advanced Snail 96 Mucin Power Essence. **4, 5 & 6. All-time favourite make-up products** *Glossier* High-Shine Lip Gloss in Clear with my go-to lip liner—Cork by *MAC Cosmetics*. My go-to foundation is the *Danessa Myricks Beauty* Yummy Skin Serum Foundation. I'm always reaching for *Patrick Starr*'s One Size Cheek Clapper 3D Blush in Attention Seeker, and my favourite concealer is *Kosas* Revealer Super Creamy Concealer. **7 & 8. Beauty products that started it all** My cousin was getting rid of her *Urban Decay* Naked Palette and Eyeshadow Primer Potion—she gave both to me and it all began there. **9. Current scent** *Phlur* Missing Person. **Fashion labels you love** *Bottega Veneta* makes my favourite underwear. I also live in *Jacquemus*, period. **The secret to your luscious locks** The one secret is that I am a Leo and I was born to have good hair. It's in my genes, it's in my blood, it's in my astrocompass. But a good wash routine helps. **A traditional Filipino beauty practice you've adopted** I don't think this is traditionally Filipino, but my grandma always told me to sleep on my back. I'm such a face sleeper and ever since I bought a pillow that forces me to sleep on my back, I've been having fewer breakouts. I can breathe better, I go to bed faster, I wake up hotter. My hair is less messy. **Self-care routine** I've been incorporating cold plunges in my routine lately. I feel that if you can get up every morning at 7.30 and force yourself into cold water, you can get through anything in your day. **Your mantra** I am beautiful. I am kind. And I have everything that I need. **What are you looking forward to seeing from beauty creators of colour?** To run things because we've been here, we created this space. Cue Rihanna: "Who's gonna run this town toniiiight". **What's next for Bretman Rock?** What is *not* next for me? Bigger, better and badder.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY EMMAN MONTALVAN.
IMAGE COORDINATION: CELESTE LEE.



Kronthaler Westwood SS23

Chilling Adventures of Sabrina (2018), Netflix

Kronthaler Westwood SS23

Elie Saab SS23

Richard Quinn AW23

Kronthaler Westwood SS23

Christian Dior SS23

Who Decides War AW23

Elie Saab SS23

Pipatchara AW23

Richard Quinn AW23

MAKING *Waves*

Get creative with your locks with this season's hair trend that sculpts tresses into wearable works of art.

Words CELESTE LEE

Up the ante on your evening beauty look by turning your locks into wearable art. If you're searching for a chic, unexpected way to elevate your hairdo, take notes from the designers who are creating a stir with defined curls that reinvent the classic marcel wave in infinite ways.

The popularity of Marcel waves may wax and wane yet they remain enduringly chic. Over the years, the look has dropped in and out of the trend cycle and picked up many variations along the way. "I'd love to see a combination of old and new versions of the look," says hairstylist and co-founder of Salon 35A, Junz Loke. Combined with the surging popularity of finger waves, texturing hair with defined curls has become the hairstyle of the moment.

Gone are the days when soft curls and free-hanging locks ruled the roost; the goal now is to create structured coils which stay locked in place, much like a wearable abstract sculpture. Whether it be tiny face-framing strands or manes sculpted into elaborate shapes, adding a whimsical twist to your hairdo is guaranteed to spice up any look.

Look to Christian Dior and Pipatchara for inspiration on incorporating these waves to grant a cheeky touch to slicked tresses. These designers opted to craft only the baby hairs into quirky twirls, the perfect way to elevate a classic look.

For a more avant-garde look, consider Richard Quinn's tightly flattened marcel waves, which create an artful two-dimensional essence. Philipp Plein showcased neat finger waves, and at Who Decides War's autumn/winter 2023 menswear show, thick voluminous waves lined with dainty pearl embellishments stole the spotlight. Elie Saab's spring 2023 haute couture show takes the cake, with ribbons of hair twisted over a slick base in a gorgeous cascade.

Turning heads at Schiaparelli's show at Paris Fashion Week, the hyperrealistic lion's head on Kylie Jenner's gown drew eyes away from the second most ingenious component of her look—the high ponytail which was cleverly crafted in a wave to dip over the crown of her head into *faux* bangs. It goes without saying that hair is indeed making waves this season with the many creative renditions making appearances.

Creating Marcel Waves

To achieve any version of these elaborate waves, the technique to master is marcelling, a traditional hairstyling method that dates back to the late 19th century. This is best attained utilising a curling iron with a clamp. Work with smooth, freshly blown-out hair to avoid kinks and tangles for a consistent wave.

"By using the clamp as well as the curvature of the curling iron, you will create concave and convex indentations down the length of the hair in an alternate pattern," says salon-trained hairstylist Christian Maranion.

It's also vital to pay attention to the nuances in technique when attempting these curls. "Don't roll all the hair onto the iron as if you are curling it," stresses Loke, explaining that the key is to "roll the iron towards the root slightly while holding the other end of the hair around the barrel to bend it into an S shape".

Finally, a generous coat of strong-hold hairspray is vital to achieve the style's signature fixed structure. Maranion's tip for creating budge-proof waves on fine hair is to first apply a layer of light-hold hairspray before the curling technique, and then seal it with the strong-hold hairspray to lock the shape in. Loke also recommends giving the look more shine for a modern feel. "Marcel waves are meant to be voluminous, but I suggest using shine and sleek products to make them more chic." He uses Goldwell's Crystal Turn High Shine Gel Wax to create magnificent waves with a soft lustre.

And to keep the tresses healthy and smooth, keep an eye on the heat. "Apart from a heat-protectant mist, applying just the right amount of heat is the best way to preserve your hair from excessive damage. One of the biggest mistakes is leaving the iron on for too long," says Maranion. "On that note, it's best to work with a curling iron with adjustable temperature settings if you're not well-versed in the art of hair curling." ●

Get the look

Oribe Royal Blowout Heat Styling Spray, $92 from Net-a-Porter

Dyson Supersonic hair dryer, $699

GHD Curve Soft Curl Tong, $334 from Sephora

Aesop Sculpt Hair Polish, $45

Oribe Dry Texturizing Spray, $63 from Selfridges

IMAGES COURTESY OF IMAXTREE

My *shinier, brighter* doppelgänger is sure in her beauty, but according to whose *definition* of *attractiveness*?

AMAFFI®
PERFUME HOUSE

Possess and Rule

INTRIGANT

FOR MEN

AMAFFI®

PERFUME HOUSE

AMAFFI.COM

OVATION

FOR WOMEN

AMAFFI®
PERFUME HOUSE

AMAFFI.COM

Savanna
Niagara Breeze
Tears of a Sinner
Black Jasmin

SAVANNA

NIAGARA BREEZE

BLACK JASMIN

TEARS OF A SINNER

FOR WOMEN

AMAFFI®
PERFUME HOUSE

AMAFFI.COM

No FILTER

A form of self-indulgent entertainment or an avenue for deep introspection? We explore how filters and photo-generating apps have rewired our beauty standards and viewpoints on self-love.

Words EMILY HENG

My self-confidence can be described as lacking in backbone and conviction. It hinges entirely on the capabilities of photo retouching applications that grant sculpted cheekbones and large, gleaming doe eyes. And by that, I mean to say: I am comfortable with my appearance, but I feel my best through the distortion of the app's presets. I am pretty, but conditionally. Perfection is supposedly within grasp, however—with the blueprint provided courtesy of platforms such as TikTok and Instagram.

For the uninitiated, some context: I am talking about the idealised version of myself found within the front-facing camera of the TikTok app and on other social media platforms. In TikTok's case, it is an in-built feature that grants all users a multitude of assumed enhancements. My shinier, brighter *doppelgänger* is sure in her beauty, but according to whose definition of attractiveness?

Cause and effect

"I've used a Korean photo retouching app," shares Nadra Afiqah Zuremi, a self-proclaimed dispassionate social media user. "You upload a selfie and it 'rectifies' imperfections automatically. I'm used to people commenting on my complexion, so it struck me as normal that the app would lighten my skin tone."

Her nonchalance surrounding her white-washing—while jarring—is the result of a long-running dispute over her heritage from numerous acquaintances. Her olive skin tone has been decreed "too fair" by some to identify as a member of the Malay community, and "too dark" by others to meet an antiquated benchmark of beauty.

"Truthfully, what made me uncomfortable were the tweaks they made to my other features. It brought out insecurities that never existed. I had believed that a lot of criticisms to do with my appearance previously were due to racially skewed standards of beauty. To have that challenged was hard," she admits.

Ironically, said alterations still do allude to a racial bias implemented by filters and apps, though in ways more covert than skin-lightening. A 2022 research paper by the Ellis Alicante Foundation found that beautifying modifications include reducing the size of the nose and making the eyes bigger and lighter—hallmarks of Eurocentric features—with results of the experiment revealing that race-prediction algorithms were then more likely to classify images of post-filtered women as Caucasian despite them being of Southeast Asian descent.

Ctrl, alt, delete

This subtle erosion and erasure of Asian ancestry proves insidious in its own ways, prompting crises and questions on identity and family. I grappled with this phenomenon after I succumbed to the allure of an accentuated jawline touted by Instagram filters. The filler in my chin stole the vestiges of softness from my face and some resemblance to my mother.

"You don't want to look like me?" she had probed upon witnessing my new visage. I stared, dumbfounded, as I attempted to process if my vanity had really been a claim to independence; a separation from the defining traits of my ethnicity not thought of to be conventionally attractive.

How is it that mere digital overlays are able to cause such seismic shifts in our perceptions of beauty? Perhaps it has to do with the understanding that it goes beyond unrealistic beauty standards, but concerns the safeguarding of our culture, too.

"It can be argued that the use of filters allows individuals to express themselves in creative ways when they can't physically," elucidates certified cognitive behavioural therapist, Syaza Hanafi, from Psychology Blossom. "People with body image issues or disordered eating may struggle with loss of control. AI technology allows users to regain that over their appearance and present themselves in a way where they feel more confident."

Provided, of course, that they're able to recognise filters for what they are—a fantasy.

The change we need

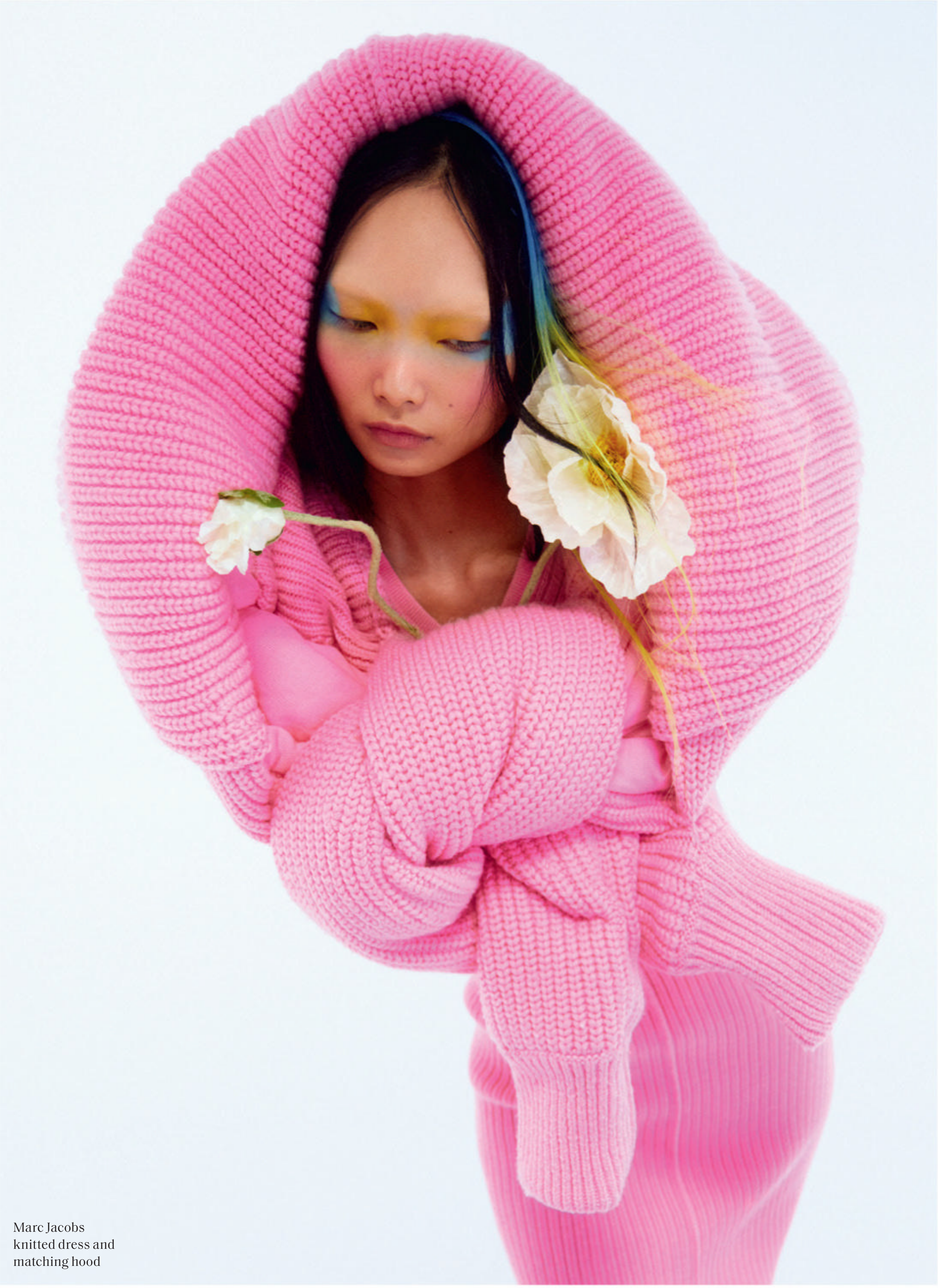
Therein lies the struggle for most of us: an awareness of the disconnect from reality that such technology sows and how it advocates for a Westernised ideal of beauty, but being unable to relinquish the possibility of it coming true with the help of the right diet, procedure or make-up. There is comfort in the conventionality that we've been fed for years.

And yet, in the interest of preserving our roots and creating a space that champions both inclusive and pragmatic beauty standards, it seems prudent that we wean ourselves off the illusion that filters provide. According to Hanafi, mindfulness during social media usage is the first step. "Focus on staying connected to the physical world and learning to build self-compassion."

Dr Ritu Jain, a senior lecturer at Nanyang Technological University with a research focus on aspects of multilingualism and public health, shares further insight on this. "Print and television media have historically promoted predominantly Eurocentric beauty standards over minority norms, including but not limited to Asian ones. As a community, we can do our part by being better role models within our circles and actively supporting content creators who promote alternate cultures and authentic portrayals."

How that looks like for you, as an individual, remains to be seen. But perhaps that is the journey we are required to undertake ourselves; a negotiation and mediation as personal as every crevice and groove of your face. The time to start is now. ●

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARCUS SCHÄFER/TRUNK ARCHIVE

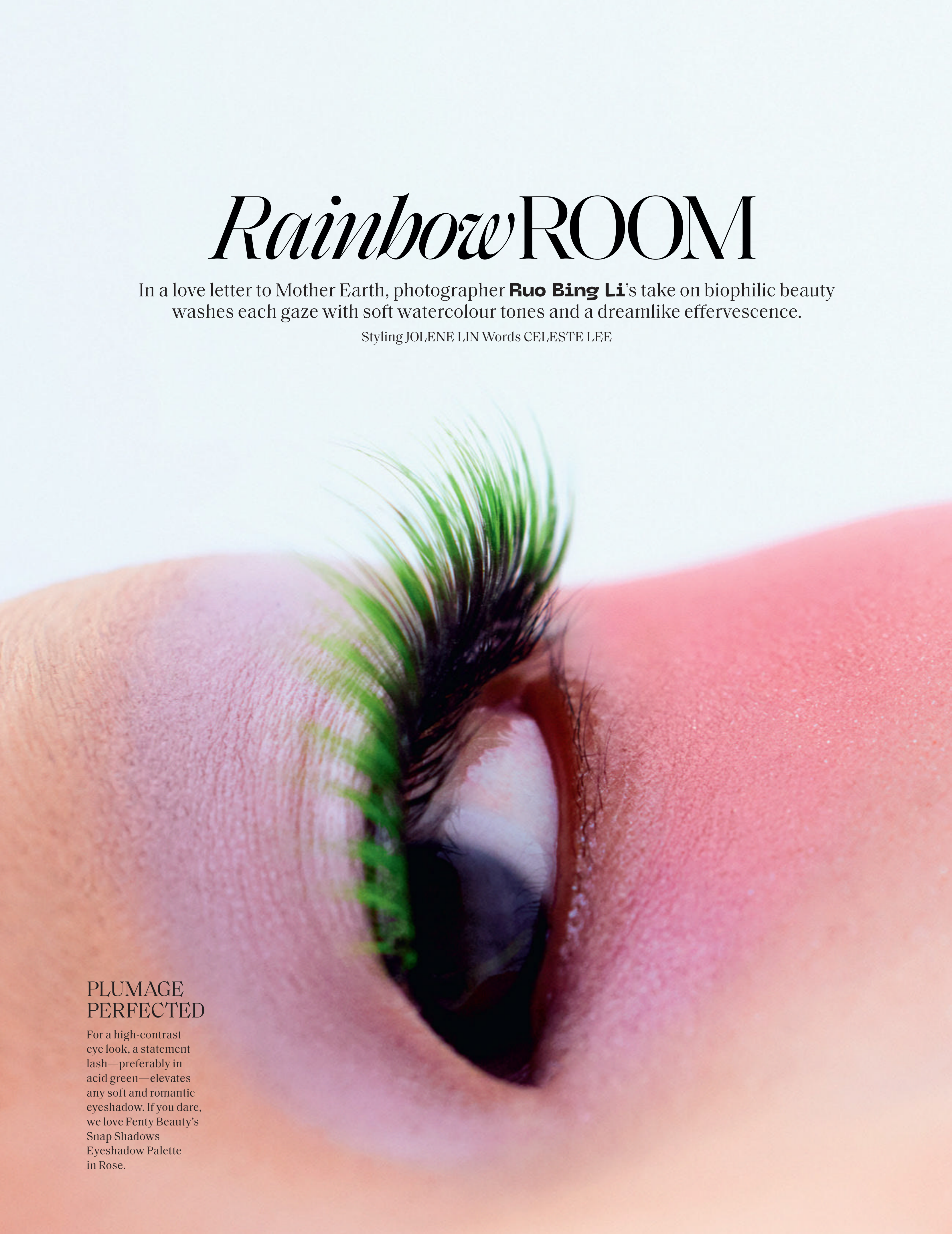


Marc Jacobs
knitted dress and
matching hood

Rainbow ROOM

In a love letter to Mother Earth, photographer **Ruo Bing Li**'s take on biophilic beauty washes each gaze with soft watercolour tones and a dreamlike effervescence.

Styling JOLENE LIN Words CELESTE LEE



PLUMAGE PERFECTED

For a high-contrast eye look, a statement lash—preferably in acid green—elevates any soft and romantic eyeshadow. If you dare, we love Fenty Beauty's Snap Shadows Eyeshadow Palette in Rose.

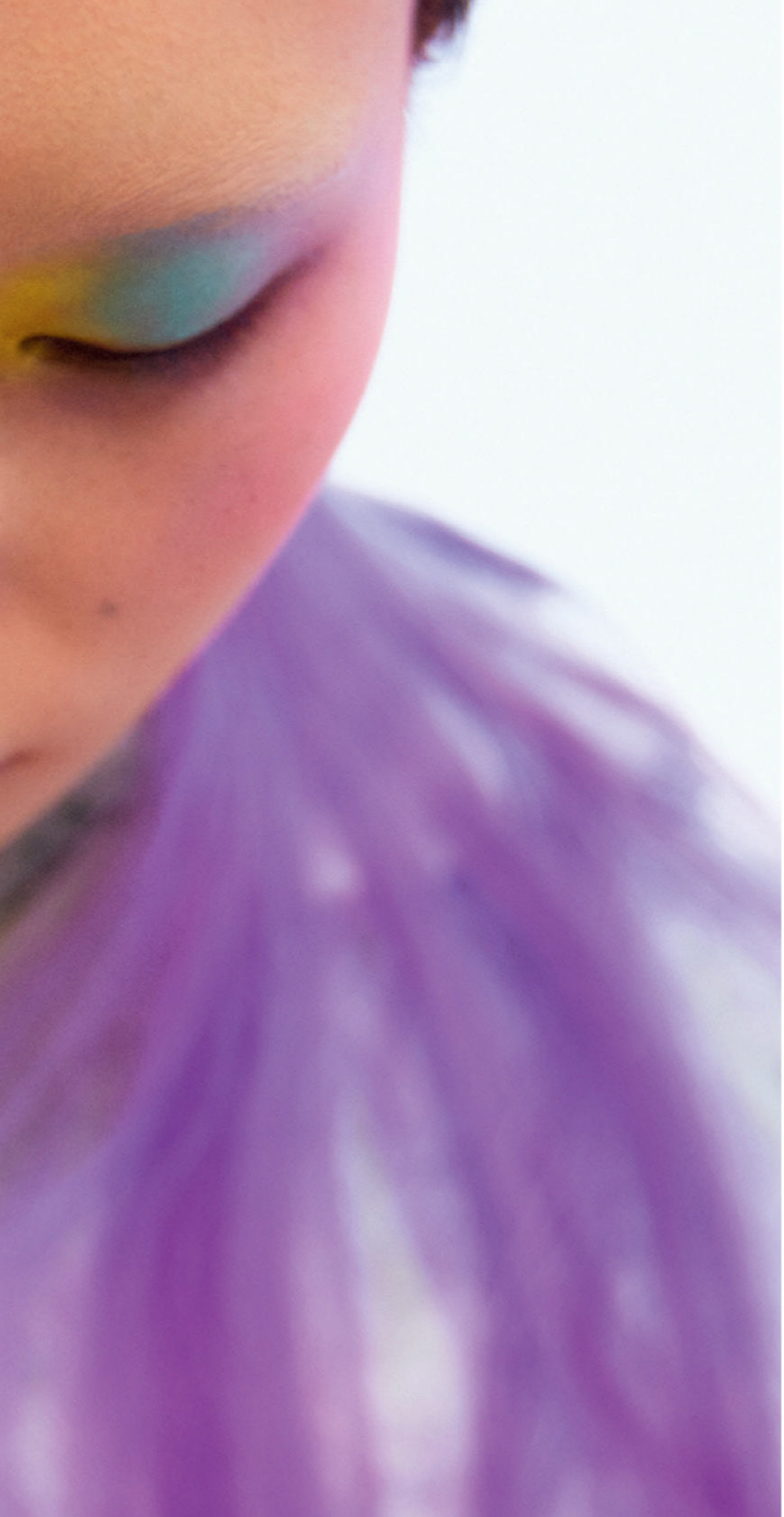
DREAM ON

For skin that appears lit-from-within, try Rare Beauty's Positive Light Silky Touch Highlighter in Enlighten. The lightest sweep of the powder-based highlighter over your cheekbones, cupid's bow and the tip of your nose will yield a soft, cherubic glow.

SEAWEED FOREST

According to the University of Connecticut, 70 percent of beauty packaging ends up in landfills. In the search for alternatives to single-use plastics, the Tom Ford Plastic Innovation Prize shines a spotlight on bioplastic innovators like Sway, Zerocircle and Kelpi, which support the development of biodegradable packaging fashioned from seaweed to work towards zero-waste beauty.

Kim Mesches resin body piece



PLAY ON PASTELS

Colour draping pigment over your temples adds instant whimsy to the face. For a toned-down effect on this dreamy Paddle Pop look, reach for Anastasia Beverly Hills' Norvina Pro Pigment Palette Vol 6.

Acne Studios dress

HEAL THE WORLD

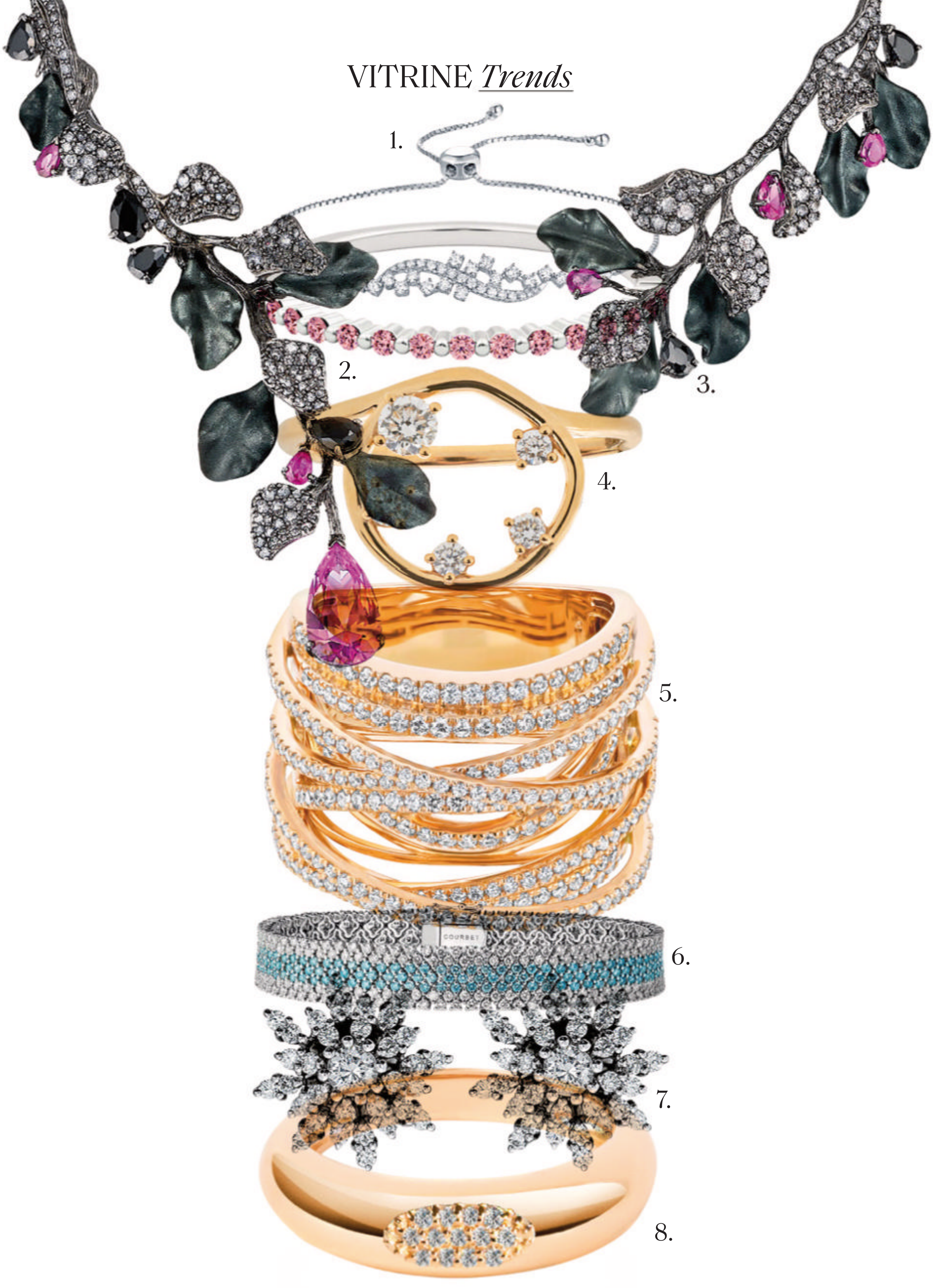
As climate change and waste management become an increasingly important issue, the beauty industry is taking strides towards sustainable practices. The Estée Lauder Companies, L'Oréal and Procter & Gamble are among key players championing alternative energy sources and smart recycling efforts to shift toward an environmentally sustainable industry.

Eckhaus Latta top and skirt

BARE BUT BETTER

Let Chanel's Les Beiges Water-Fresh Tint melt into your skin for a luminous bare-skin effect. Composed of encapsulated pigments in a hydrating suspension created with microfluidic technology, this formula offers a supple, dewy radiance which lasts all day. Dust on Chantecaille's Wild Meadows Blush in Apple Blossom for a rosy flush.

Hair, Junya Nakashimaya; make-up, Kuma; casting director, Marina Fairfax; model, Ling Chen.



Cutting EDGES

Lab-grown diamond jewellery brings the same sparkle but with minimal carbon footprint.

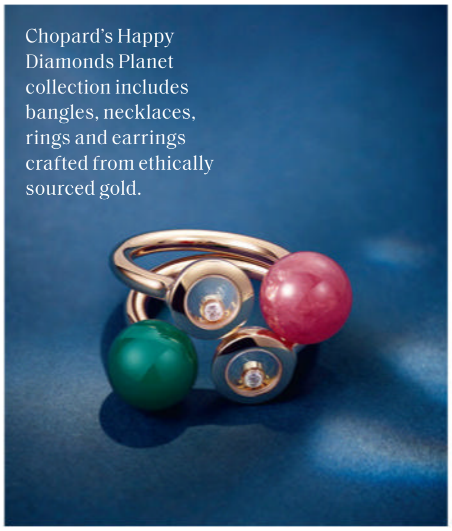
Edit JESSLYN LYE

1. *Smiling Rocks* Drizzle bracelet, $3,190 **2.** *Mimoke* Basalto fine ring, $692 from The Future Rocks **3.** *Anabela Chan* black diamond fuchsia Thea collar, £4,290 **4.** *Hikari* Orbit ring, $637 from The Future Rocks **5.** *Noémie* The Come Together ring in 18-carat gold with 1.5-carat VS clarity white diamonds, US$3,930 **6.** *Courbet* Tennis blue and white *pavé* set bracelet in 18-carat white recycled gold with 8.08-carat laboratory-grown diamonds, €25,000 **7.** *David Locco Diamonds* Supernova earrings, €3,879 **8.** *Prmal* Dome Slice ring, $840

BLUE *Planet*

Natural stones and ethical gold meet **Chopard**'s iconic dancing diamonds in the new Happy Diamonds Planet, a testament of the *maison*'s unwavering commitment to sustainable luxury.

Words JESSLYN LYE



Chopard's Happy Diamonds Planet collection includes bangles, necklaces, rings and earrings crafted from ethically sourced gold.

Embodying the richness of nature and the splendour of the cosmos, Chopard's Happy Diamonds Planet is a stunning tribute to the beauty of Earth. A thoughtful reinterpretation of the brand's beloved Happy Diamonds collection, the pieces centre the *maison*'s signature dancing diamonds—in which moving gemstones are held between two panes of delicate sapphire crystal.

Accompanying the dancing diamond in a graceful *pas de deux* is a natural stone whose spherical shape gives rise to the collection's name. When perched next to the sparkle of the diamond, its resemblance to a planet in orbit around a star evokes a mesmerising encounter with the galaxy. Chosen to symbolise natural strength and life, green agate, blue lapis lazuli, black onyx and pink rhodochrosite offer a joyful palette of vibrant colours to choose from.

Aptly, the name 'planet' is also representative of Chopard's dedication to achieving sustainable luxury. Acutely aware of the social and environmental challenges that the watch and jewellery industry is confronted with, the brand is driven by an ambitious long-term commitment to make a positive difference in the business. With gold being the raw material most often used in the production of its pieces, the *maison* is committed to only using responsibly sourced gold that meets international best practice environmental and social standards. The Happy Diamonds Planet collection, in turn, comes meticulously crafted by the *maison*'s artisans in ethical 18-carat rose gold.

In its creation of the collection, Chopard captures and preserves the precious beauty of the world we live in. The pieces, elegant and joyful, are a reflection of the way our planet should be treated—as something to be cherished. ●

Hooked On A FEELING

With one colour for every emotion, **Pomellato** Nudo rings lay bare the natural splendour of gemstones through its innovative 'nude' setting, where the real magic lies in that which you do not see.

Words CELINE YAP

Rose quartz represents empathy in Pomellato's latest Nudo campaign, Crafted Emotions.

Travelling 30 minutes out of Milan city centre, my driver took me to an area known as Quartiere Stadera, the steelyard district of Metropolitan Milan. Stepping out into the crisp morning air, I couldn't quite decipher where amid these endless rows of nondescript grey stone buildings might I find Casa Pomellato, global headquarters of the Milanese luxury jeweller. There were no big signboards or entrances in sight, nothing glitzy or flashy that denoted the presence of a great jewellery house—just a modest though immaculately styled cherry-red door reminiscent of Pomellato's beautifully lacquered jewellery boxes. That had to be it, I ventured, and true enough it was, as my hosts warmly ushered me in.

As I walked through the threshold, however, nothing could prepare me for the sheer beauty and tranquillity that would begin to envelope me.

It was like a postcard-perfect Zen garden, with lush bamboo thickets stretching up towards the sky, tempered by calm clear water, and backed by dark wood and red-walled interior façades for a vivacious pop of colour. After my retinas had been numbed by 30-minute journey full of weary greys and dull browns typical of Milanese industrial architecture, this amiable setting allowed me a quiet respite before starting on my tour of Pomellato's jewellery crafting workshops. The calm before the storm, if you will, but only where storm here refers to the collective acceleration of my heartbeat as we delved ever farther down this fascinating rabbit hole.

The atmosphere was warren-like, with a plethora of different rooms, studios and workshops, some cavernous, others intimate, where over 100 craftsmen and women keep the Casa humming to a steady rhythm.

I was on a tour of the Pomellato jewellery workshops to discover the wonders—and uncover the secrets—of the jeweller's iconic Nudo collection. Utterly unique in style and a joyful celebration of colour and emotion through gemstones of all kinds, Nudo is the Italian word for 'naked'.

The collection is so named because of how its gemstones are always put on full display and can be admired from every angle thanks to an ingenious setting which is completely devoid of gold prongs. Gemstones are also generously cut for maximum exposure to light, revealing natural hues in their finest glory. Most

THIS PAGE
Conceptualised by Milanese digital artist Alberto Maria Colombo, the campaign was filmed at Villa Necchi Campiglio in downtown Milan.

FACING PAGE
Pomellato Nudo rings feature coloured gemstones shaped in a signature 57-facet cut, or full *pavé* diamonds.

appreciated for its vast selection of cocktail rings, Nudo embodies the spirit and essence of Pomellato as well as the brand's distinctive Milanese design energy.

"The concept of a Nudo ring is simple at first, but when you pay attention and really look at it, you discover more," says Pomellato's creative director Vincenzo Castaldo. "You can then truly appreciate the setting which is innovative because part of the stone is immersed in the gold. This gives the stone a depth of colour. Next is the cut, with very light facets. It's a little austere which is very Milanese and reminds one of '50s and '60s Milanese architecture." Really breaking down this signature Pomellato jewel to its core, Castaldo scrutinises even the shank, which is perfectly geometric in its straight, non-tapering proportions. "It's a combination of all these details, some of which could be very small details, but it's the sum of all these details that made Nudo extraordinary," he stresses.

Indeed, Nudo is luxury stripped bare. And as with the simplest of great designs, it all boils down to the details. However, Pomellato's journey to creating such a minimalist yet instantly recognisable design was nothing short of astounding. Introduced at the turn of the new millennium, it revolutionised the way people perceived gemstones and gem-setting—much like how the brand's founding in 1967 revolutionised the way people perceived jewellery.

In both instances, Pomellato made jewellery design contemporary and as a result, appealed to women who were modern trend-setters rather than followers. The appearance of Nudo in 2001 brought about a very important change to Pomellato, and to the jewellery world at large.

"The feedback we received from the market was immediate and so overwhelming," Castaldo recalls. He was just a young designer with the company then, but very quickly he was cognizant of the potential impact that Nudo had. "We began to understand what Nudo meant to women. It was innovative, it was creative, it resonated deeply with our customers. Because at the end, Nudo introduced a very simple idea, very pure. Nudo is simplicity, and it is desire. In its own unique way, Nudo was able to evoke emotions immediately."

A World of Colour

With one colour for every kind of emotion, Nudo was the centre of attention in Pomellato's latest Crafted Emotions campaign, where art and science collided in the most beautiful though unexpected way—how very Milanese, one might add. Says CEO of Pomellato, Sabina Belli: "Nudo is the quintessence of Pomellato's innovative style and like every woman, it is unique in its beauty and made up of many facets. Jewellery, like art, is about feelings, emotions and connections."

To showcase the vivid world of Nudo and express Pomellato's modern innovative spirit, the brand engaged Milanese digital artist Alberto Maria Colombo to produce and direct a video campaign driven by artificial intelligence (AI) that captured the multifaceted identity of the collection in under 60 seconds.

"We commissioned Alberto Maria Colombo to employ his visionary techniques to express the universe of Nudo and its intrinsic links to our heritage of craftsmanship and the city of Milan," Belli continues. "The result is a very contemporary and fascinating interpretation of Nudo with a Milanese soul."

"The *concept* of a *Nudo* ring is *simple* at first, but when you really *pay attention* and look at it, you *discover more*."

Known for his bold use of AI to create some of the most mesmerising, hyper-realistic digital content, Colombo brought a mix of cutting-edge technology and traditional skills into the project. The result is a fantastical video animation connecting two worlds that cannot be more diametrically opposed: Impressionist art and futuristic intelligence. Here, he attempts to capture the full range of emotions as expressed by Nudo's gemstones—and succeeds without there even being a single word uttered. It was all just light, colour, movement and emotion in Colombo's magnetic collaboration with Pomellato.

"Nudo is about beautiful gems and colours," he offers. "Crafted Emotions expresses the fine craftsmanship that's behind each Nudo jewel and the ability of each gemstone to conjure up a rich interior world, which I've represented by mixing photography, painting and artificial intelligence."

Specifically, Colombo created a series of feminine portraits and different personalities that 'bloom' in an imaginary world as they emote through different settings. The surrounding space thus becomes a reflection of the feelings that each stone evoked in him. He elaborates: "In the work that I've conceived, the real world and the ethereal one fuse completely, creating something magical."

And it was no mere coincidence that Colombo sought to invoke Impressionist art in the production. Because just as Impressionism changed the way artists depicted the world through emotion rather than straight-up realism, Nudo changed the way jewellery could be perceived, and designed, while remaining true to gemstone mastery and time-honoured craftsmanship.

Shot at the gorgeous Villa Necchi—a 1930s privately owned mansion in downtown Milan and an absolute symbol of *milanesità*—Colombo's video for Pomellato portrays a modern sophisticated woman wandering around the beautiful villa, experiencing a range of feelings in a multi-layered, colour-saturated visual journey.

"Blue is the colour of the sky, which we look at, particularly when seeking inspiration. I portrayed blue topaz as the gem which embodies the concept of vision," says Colombo. Other stone-to-emotion pairings include rose quartz for empathy, prasiolite for focus, amethyst for ambition, garnet for fierceness, lemon quartz for euphoria, smoky quartz for independence, moonstone for wonder, obsidian for audacity and white topaz for gratitude.

This brilliant combination of art and AI, innovation and pure emotion, captures the gist of every encounter with a Nudo jewellery piece. First, there is physical beauty, then there is an emotional experience. Innovation is always present, existing as a counterpoint to tradition. And charting the future chapters of Nudo, Castaldo describes it best: "It's a constant dialogue between past and future. There is always this a connection between what we do now and our heritage, tradition and roots. There is always a balanced dialogue between these aspects." ●

IMAGES COURTESY OF POMELLATO

THIS PAGE
Zoë Kravitz's elegant day look includes Tiffany & Co. HardWear necklace and bracelet.

FACING PAGE
Gal Gadot and Jimin complete the This Is Tiffany campaign wearing Tiffany T creations.

POWER *In Simplicity*

From Zoë Kravitz and Gal Gadot to Jimin of BTS, there is a **Tiffany & Co.** HardWear aesthetic for everybody.

Words CELINE YAP

It is *true*, *expressive* and *real*—an *authentic* and *unapologetic expression* of personal style.

Bringing a bit of New York City wherever it goes, Tiffany & Co.'s HardWear collection is all about embracing joy and optimism, but most of all it's about celebrating one's individuality. With those signature gauge links inspired by the architecture and energy of the Big Apple—Tiffany & Co.'s home city—the pieces range from subtle to subversive depending on how they play with tension, proportions and balance.

Think voluminous links fully paved with sparkling diamonds, elegant freshwater pearls juxtaposed with industrial-inspired motifs, ball bearings sliding along on micro-links and you begin to get the idea. Yet no matter which Tiffany & Co. HardWear creations have caught your eye, don't ever forget that you are at the centre of it all because everything comes down to how you wear the jewellery.

This emphasis on individuality was the foundation of Tiffany & Co.'s latest This Is Tiffany campaign starring Jimin of BTS as well as actresses Zoë Kravitz and Gal Gadot. All three are ambassadors of the House and couldn't be more different from one another in terms of personality and style. But united via common threads of fierce elegance and modern sophistication, they demonstrate the raw power of Tiffany & Co. HardWear and Tiffany T.

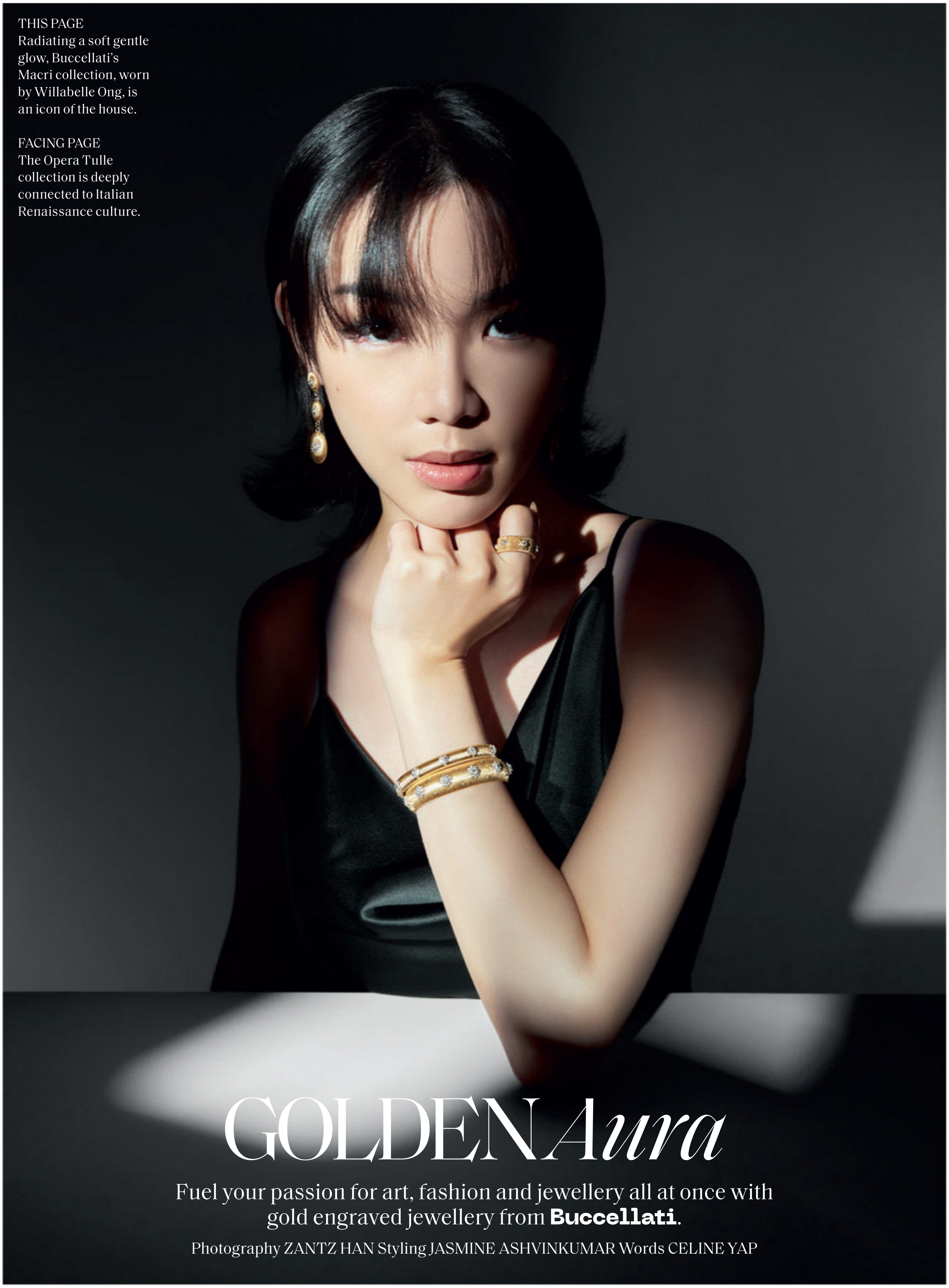
"Our campaign is an authentic homage to individual style. We may make the jewellery but it's house ambassadors like Zoë, Jimin of BTS and Gal who give meaning to the collections and make our pieces all their own," says Alexandre Arnault, executive vice president of product and communication at Tiffany & Co.

Tiffany & Co. aficionados will love how the campaign distils the essence of Kravitz, Jimin and Gadot to their core, devoid of bells and whistles to grab one's attention. Instead, it is true, expressive and real—an authentic and unapologetic expression of personal style. Kravitz's raw, edgy style always comes through whether on the red carpet or off-duty from filming. What's the secret to her effortless chic ensembles? Nine out of 10 it's her accessories—occasionally it's just her amazing cool-girl attitude.

In this campaign, she wore two contrasting everyday looks, both accompanied by the same Tiffany & Co. HardWear jewellery. Meanwhile, newly minted brand ambassador Jimin loves his jackets and chooses to style them with pieces from HardWear as well as Tiffany T, proving how gender-neutral and timeless these designs are.

Also toting Tiffany T jewellery in the campaign is Gadot, who is always elegant and polished with a glowing sophistication. This time, the *Wonder Woman* star trades in her statement Bone cuffs for a Tiffany T1 three-bracelet stack in a trio of gold tones. But for a dramatic evening look, she models a single wide-hinged bangle, pairing it with a T1 choker necklace, both diamond-set for maximum wattage.

Driving home the importance of being oneself and finding one's voice in life as much as in style, this campaign is ultimately not just about Tiffany & Co. but a tribute to all who wear its jewellery. ●



THIS PAGE
Radiating a soft gentle glow, Buccellati's Macri collection, worn by Willabelle Ong, is an icon of the house.

FACING PAGE
The Opera Tulle collection is deeply connected to Italian Renaissance culture.

GOLDEN *Aura*

Fuel your passion for art, fashion and jewellery all at once with gold engraved jewellery from **Buccellati**.

Photography ZANTZ HAN Styling JASMINE ASHVINKUMAR Words CELINE YAP

CREATIVE PRODUCER, VANESSA CAITLIN; ASSOCIATE CREATIVE PRODUCER, HAZIRAH RAHIM; HAIR AND MAKE-UP, JYUE HUEY/THE MAKEUP ROOM; PHOTOGRAPHER'S ASSISTANTS, SIN YEAN AND AMOS LEE; CREATIVE PRODUCTION ASSISTANT, LEONARD WONG; MODEL WILLABELLE ONG.

Occasionally left completely open-worked, the *ethereal lightness* of this design is truly *breathtaking*.

Italian heritage jeweller Buccellati sits at the heart of a beautiful triumvirate where art, fashion and craftsmanship intersect. Designing, and producing by hand, some of the most original works of high jewellery art, it is one of a handful of leading jewellers that is still managed by its founding family. Till today, Buccellati continually pays tribute to the various inspirational touchpoints that led goldsmithing virtuoso Mario Buccellati to start his own business in 1919.

These range from traditional Italian arts and crafts such as Venetian lace and silk making and Etruscan patterns to wildlife and vegetation throughout the country. Buccellati's creations were also influenced by the Italian Renaissance period and its progressive interpretations of art, culture and literature.

But most of all, jewellery by Buccellati forefronts magnificent handcrafted Italian goldsmithing techniques, some of which had been invented—or reinvented—by the House, and others which had been lovingly preserved and perpetuated by its teams of artisans today. Over the decades, time-honoured techniques like engraving, open-working and enchaining have become an intrinsic part of the Buccellati creative process, synonymous with the jeweller's signature style.

Within hand-engraving alone there are a myriad different styles. Rigato, which is instantly recognisable by Buccellati fans, yields a delicate sheen that is reminiscent of the finest silk. It adorns all creations in the iconic Macri collection, such as the delightfully stackable Macri Classica bracelets as well as the Macri cuffs with their sumptuous volumes. Formed by painstakingly engraving multitudes of fine lines all over the gold, this hand-applied technique elevates the simplest of creations into the realm of high jewellery.

Exquisite craftsmanship continues in the lovely Opera Tulle collection, which pays tribute to Italian culture through beautiful symmetry and the floral motif. With opera being deeply connected to Buccellati's Italian roots, its connection with the Teatro alla Scala in Milan becomes immediately apparent.

In Opera Tulle, Buccellati combines goldsmithing techniques, tulle craftsmanship and enamelling with a bright, shimmery exuberance it gets from semi-precious stones such as onyx and mother-of-pearl.

Coloured enamel, in particular, adds a powerful personality to the pieces through vibrant hues like blue, green and red. Enamel is one of the world's oldest crafts, dating back to the ancient Greeks and Romans. Here, it sets a dramatic contrast against the filigreed gold structure of Buccellati's radial tulle pattern, which is yet another of the company's signature techniques. Occasionally left completely open-worked, the ethereal lightness of this design is truly breathtaking.

Likewise, the Ramage and Rombi collections espouse a similar gossamer effect and Renaissance inspiration, but each with a distinctive core identity. Ramage pieces derive their fluid lines and gentle curves from the simplicity, grace and majesty of Mother Nature. Vines and foliage, branches and florals spread out in an intricate labyrinth hemmed by textured yellow gold.

Meanwhile, the geometric Rombi pieces provide an elegant counterpoint to the naturalistic inclinations of Ramage. They also play around with gold tone combinations such as yellow on white, accentuated with diamonds, forming a continuous pattern of rhomboidal elements throughout the piece.

Embodying such heritage-rich artisanal techniques, Buccellati's gold and silver jewellery is always conceptualised from the heart and then painstakingly made by hand. Surfaces are never ostentatiously shiny, but rather, are meticulously treated with a special effect thanks to the various engraving, open-working and enchaining techniques.

This is the unique *savoir-faire* of Buccellati that was introduced over 100 years ago, but is continually honed for the next generation. ●

ROCK *of* EDGES

Toying with studs, spikes, beads and lots of hard edges, the punk rock aesthetic of **Cartier**'s Clash [Un]limited takes an artful turn, but this time in a timepiece.

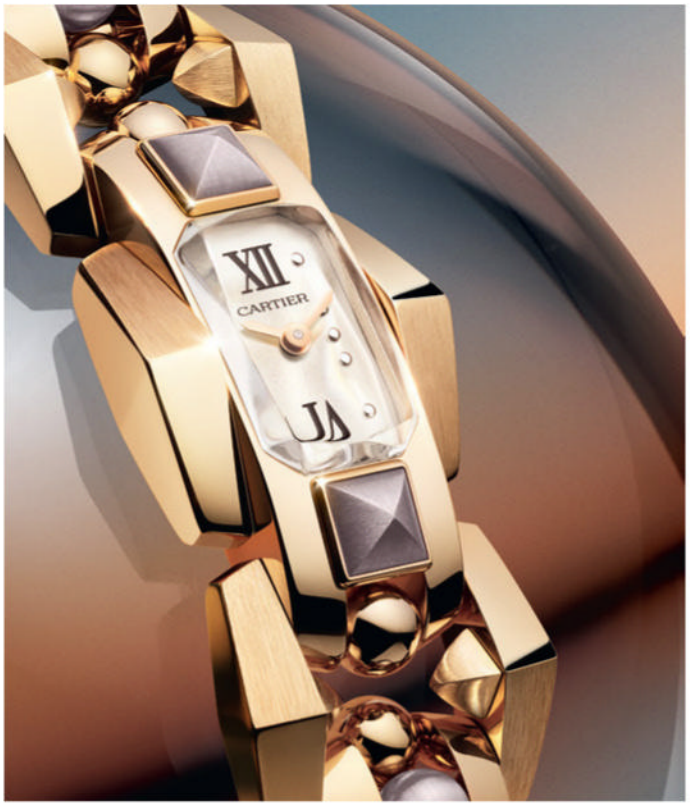
Words CELINE YAP

There's always something visceral about the juxtaposition of complete opposites. When two ideas which cannot be more different from one another clash in a head-on collision, sometimes the sparks that fly could only be described as absolute magic. And when that happens, one could only imagine the visionary force that brought them together in the first place.

Take Lily Collins' electrifying looks both on and off the red carpet for instance. When not toting the boldest fashion trends on the latest season of *Emily In Paris*, the actress delves into an eclectic style that's equal parts feminine and edgy, embracing modern and vintage like a true fashionista. That's why she's the face of Cartier's Clash [Un]Limited, a collection defined by tension, reinvention and modernity with respect for tradition.

Indeed, Cartier has always been an innovative and progressive jeweller. But Clash [Un]Limited was unprecedented even for the *maison* that inducted screws and nails into the fine jewellery lexicon. Through exaggerated volumes, oversized studs, piercing hues and sculpted beads, the pieces are a push-back against conventional rules and classicism.

To date, Cartier has created Clash [Un]Limited picot rings that have no shank, multi-finger rings that wear like hyper-luxurious knuckle-dusters, reversible spike-covered bracelets, and even a mitten watch woven out of pink gold featuring a Baignoire Allongée case covered with studs. Evidently, everything here begins with the Clash de Cartier stud motif, writ large or in multitudes, paved with diamonds, and enhanced with striking black onyx plus the occasional hint of purple.



Moving swiftly into the third year, Cartier continues to hone the unique creative vision of Clash [Un]Limited, most recently in a trio of timepieces that experiments with new facets, new materials and a new interpretation of jewellery and watchmaking art. These creations take the Clash [Un]Limited DNA into spectacular universe where beauty is tactile, colours are intense, and shapes, multi-dimensional. They are art pieces carved and sculpted out of precious materials—some resilient, others delicate, but all perfectly mastered—which give more than just the time but also inspire awe, delight and amusement.

As always, Clash [Un]Limited codes set the scene. Beads, picot studs, *clou carrés* (angular studs) and geometrical facets make up the watch's core architecture. But Cartier also retained another key element that might easily escape the eye: mobility. Much as many Clash [Un]Limited jewellery pieces are designed to surprise and beguile, so are these timepieces which feature rolling beads that move as the watch rolls around the wrist. Providing a sharp visual contrast to the faceted links, these beads are joined by *clou carrés*—a signature of Cartier—in a constant ebb and flow of fully articulated edges and curves.

Even the crystal has been elegantly cut to reveal 16 facets, all perfectly symmetrical, echoing the design of the bracelet.

Cartier's innovative approach with the Clash [Un]Limited watch is a glittering reminder of its golden age of creativity. Did you know that beads first appeared in the Cartier catalogues as early as the 1930s? That happened under the design direction of Jeanne Toussaint, whose penchant for voluminous jewellery was known to all. Daring to mix industrial aesthetics such as ball bearings with precious diamonds and gold, this magnificent clash between *haute and bas* would ultimately provide a natural link between past and present for generations of Cartier designers.

But the Clash [Un]Limited watch is unfortunately not unlimited in production. Crafted in highly exclusive numbers, it is made in five distinct variations. The *pièce de resistance* is a rose gold model with its bracelet paved in black spinels and chrysoprases, dotted with radiant tsavorites, and completed with *clou carrés* and rolling beads in vibrant red coral, as well as diamond *pavé* pink gold. A second pink gold model relies less on ornamental stones for a chromatic hit, deriving it instead from violet gold—a new gold alloy specially developed for Cartier.

Violet gold also appears in the yellow gold model, while the two remaining models in white gold proffer a monochromatic palette combining the fire of *pavé* diamonds with smooth polished black spinels and obsidian, or a fully iced-out look that matches white gold with white diamonds. Joining other category-defying jewellery watches of the *maison* such as Libre Morphosis, Crash Tigrée Métamorphoses and Maillon de Cartier, the Clash [Un] Limited watch is destined for the Jeanne Toussaints of today. ●

They are *art pieces* carved and sculpted out of *precious materials*, giving more than just the time, and *inspiring awe*, *delight* and *amusement*.

Finesse meets power in the Clash [Un] Limited watch, which is studded here with spinels, tsavorites, coral, chrysoprases and diamonds.

EARTHBOUND

At the hands of artists pushing the boundaries of their craft, materials of the earth are transformed into beautiful works of ceramic art.

Edit JESSLYN LYE

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1. *Jane Yang-D'haene* moon jar
2. *Omelet Trees Studio* micro Homelet
3. *ReCheng Tsang* Skyview, from Gallery Lulo
4. *Kate Malone* a woven jug of coloured clay, from Adrian Sassoon
5. *Katie Spragg* Bloom, Shepherd's Purse and Grasses
6. *Nathalee Paolinelli* Coral
7. *Suku Park* landscape vase, from Hansaram
8. *Daisy Toh* September
9. *Malwina Kleparska* big red sculptural candleholder

Cinematheque

He Shuming, director of Singaporean-South Korean feature *Ajoomma*, curates a diverse selection of films capturing the distinct nuances in Asian parent-child relationships.

Riceboy Sleeps (2022)
"In *Riceboy Sleeps*, Choi Seung-yoon gives an affecting performance as a Korean single mother who moves to suburban Canada seeking a better life for her son. Winning the Platform Prize at the Toronto International Film Festival, Korean-Canadian director Anthony Shim's second feature explores the intimate diasporic spaces both mother and son occupy as they navigate a new-found land."

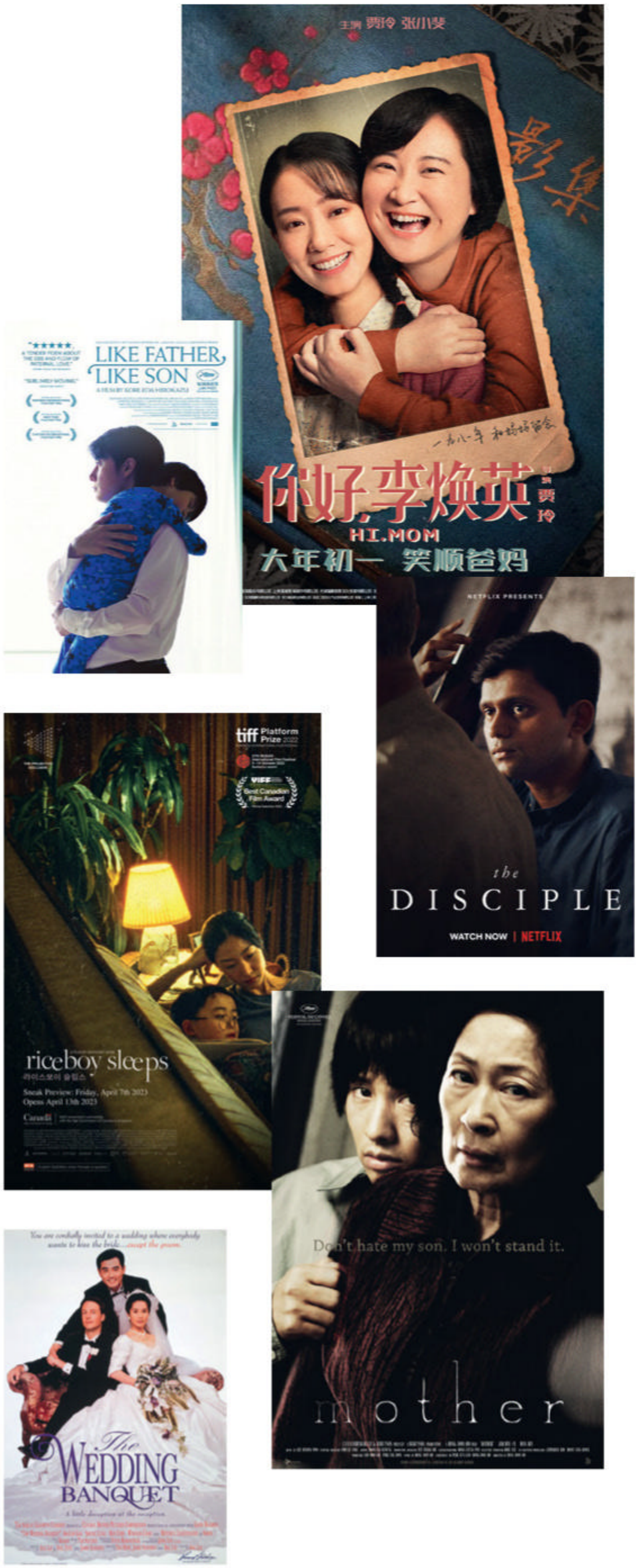
The Disciple (2020)
"Chaitanya Tamhane's sophomore film is a triumph. A Marathi-language feature about an Indian classical musician's unwavering devotion to his craft following the traditions of his father and mentors, *The Disciple* stars Aditya Modak who is impressive in his debut role as protagonist Sharad Nerulkar."

Like Father, Like Son (2013)
"This is one of my favourite films by director Hirokazu Koreeda. Two babies are accidentally swapped at birth and raised by families of different social status. Now aged six, they are faced with the heart-breaking prospect of returning to their birth families. Koreeda never reduces his characters to stereotypes even as they shift through the perennial question of nature versus nature."

Mother (2009)
"The ending of Bong Joon-ho's *Mother* remains one of the most memorable scenes in contemporary cinema for me. As a mother's undying love for her son causes their lives to mirror each other in terrible ways, this Hitchcockian thriller serves as a character study into the darkest depths of the human psyche."

Hi, Mom (2021)
"Created as a tribute to the film-maker's own mother, *Hi, Mom* is the world's highest grossing film made by a solo female director. It tells the story of a young Chinese woman who travels back in time and befriends her late mother. Director Jia Ling also plays the lead and serves as co-writer."

The Wedding Banquet (1993)
"Nominated for an Oscar and a Golden Globe for Best Foreign-Language Film, *The Wedding Banquet* follows a gay Taiwanese immigrant in New York City who marries a mainland Chinese woman in order to placate his parents and get her a green card. Trouble ensues when his parents arrive to plan the wedding and he has to hide the identity of his male partner." ●



AS TOLD TO JESSLYN LYE

COMMUNITY *Spirit*

After eight years in Singapore, **Mirko Febbrile** is opening his very own restaurant, Fico, at East Coast Park—and it is a promising amalgamation of his past, present and future.

Photography SAYHER HEFFERNAN Styling DESMOND LIM Words AMELIA CHIA

Mirko wears Ferragamo shirt and trousers; accessories and shoes, his own.

Mirko Febbrile is as ambitious and plucky as they come. As a result, he is perched on a chair in a construction site that will soon be his new restaurant, Fico, with a squawking chicken on his back. He turns to peck the chicken next to him with a humourless gaze, before he bursts out laughing at the absurdity of it all. We are at the shoot for this particular story, and just two days prior, he had gamely convinced us that having a chicken on set would add to the conceptual nature of our photos. Febbrile was right—we scrolled through the final photos after we were done, and nodded in agreement that our unconventional decision had paid off.

Perhaps it is this exact boldness that has landed Febbrile at this exact juncture. Hailing from Puglia, Italy, the 31-year-old is just weeks away from opening his first restaurant amid the lush greenery at East Coast Park, in partnership with The Lo & Behold Group. Fico is a combination of Febbrile's worlds—of his joyful childhood and whom he used to be, and the person he is now.

"It's 80 percent of my past and 20 percent of who I am today. I grew up surrounded by positive vibes and authenticity, and many people having fun at the table," he explains. 'We could talk about anything from money to religion, and it was always around food. It fascinated me." He adds with a pensive smile: "So, it's about going back to basics and enjoying the simplicity of savouring the moment. I want it to be a community, not a restaurant. It is a place where people can get together to spend time and feel free to express themselves."

Febbrile recounts the days of his youth, when he spent time with his extended family at his grandmother's house and was surrounded by food. He would play hide-and-seek with his cousins and find a safe spot under the kitchen table where his grandmother would be rolling pasta. "It was a beautiful feeling having my memories of play alongside food, which is a big part of my culture," he says. He chatters gleefully about how freshly baked bread and pasta were some of his favourite things to eat back in the day.

While most chefs enroll in culinary school first with hopes of making it in the industry, Febbrile's foray into food was intrinsically organic, and almost accidental. As an eight-year-old, he started to look up dessert recipes online and experiment whenever he was home with his younger brother. "I made cakes as it was easy because a cake recipe is scientific—all you need to do is follow the steps. The funny thing was that in my pantry, I would always be missing many ingredients for the specific recipes, like orange, flour or baking soda," he says.

"I would ask for things from my neighbours—two eggs, one orange, one lemon and 500 grams of flour, for example. Imagine the number of things my mum had to return!" Febbrile continues with a glint in his eye. "My mum would then meet up with all the ladies in the building and they would ask, 'By the way, when do you intend to return our 20 eggs or 2kg of flour'?"

To further develop his love for food, the spunky boy then went on to work at a bar in Puglia at the age of 12, where he was paid in *mortadella paninis* and Coke. He also enrolled in culinary school for five years, before he became tired of the lack of progression. Febbrile decided learning languages in university was his way out, while supplementing his time with a three-year stint at McDonald's to improve his mastery of languages. Now, with eight years in Singapore under his belt, Febbrile is ready for his next chapter after his last role as chef de cuisine at one-Michelin-starred Braci.

At Fico, which is Italian for 'fig', every dish is created with three to four ingredients. It is fashioned after a *masseria*, which is a fortified farmhouse built in the 16th century in Puglia. *Masserias* are typically expansive and Fico is divided into three parts: a kiosk, restaurant and an outdoor area. With its stunning location by the beach, the kiosk is a clever choice to cater to all parkgoers. You'll find fresh takeaway items here, such as Febbrile's Pasta In The Hands, a generous ball of pasta cooked by doubling its sauce, before it is crumbed and deep-fried to perfection so you can eat it on the go. He will also serve burrata ice cream with tomato jam and strawberries, as well as piping hot *panzarottis*, a savoury hot pocket stuffed with mozzarella and tomato, or minced meat.

A selection of Fico's desserts that will be available on the restaurant's daily dessert trolley.

Inside the restaurant, Fico's pasta counter breaks barriers and encourages conversations between chefs and customers, while its communal table in the centre are ideal for groups. The space is open and airy, swathed in white and earthy tones. Terracotta tiles, ceiling lights and plates are imported from Puglia, furniture is custom-made by Roger&Sons using fallen trees, and bougainvillea installations are a collaboration with This Humid House.

Fresh bread is served, baked in fig leaves as a nod to the restaurant's name, alongside two specially curated olive oils flown from Puglia. Expect a varied selection of food to share, which includes seafood, meat, cold cuts, cheeses and pastas—from the familiar *linguine alle vongole* to an *orecchiette* with turnip tops and anchovies, a less familiar but classic Puglian dish. Febbrile aims to be sustainable with his ingredients, choosing only to work with small suppliers to reduce carbon footprint. Your meal ends with a daily dessert trolley, stuffed to the brim with decadent tarts and pies for diners to choose from. "The idea is to have a lot of things on the table, where you can try most of the menu without feeling too full or like you've spent a fortune," Febbrile sums up.

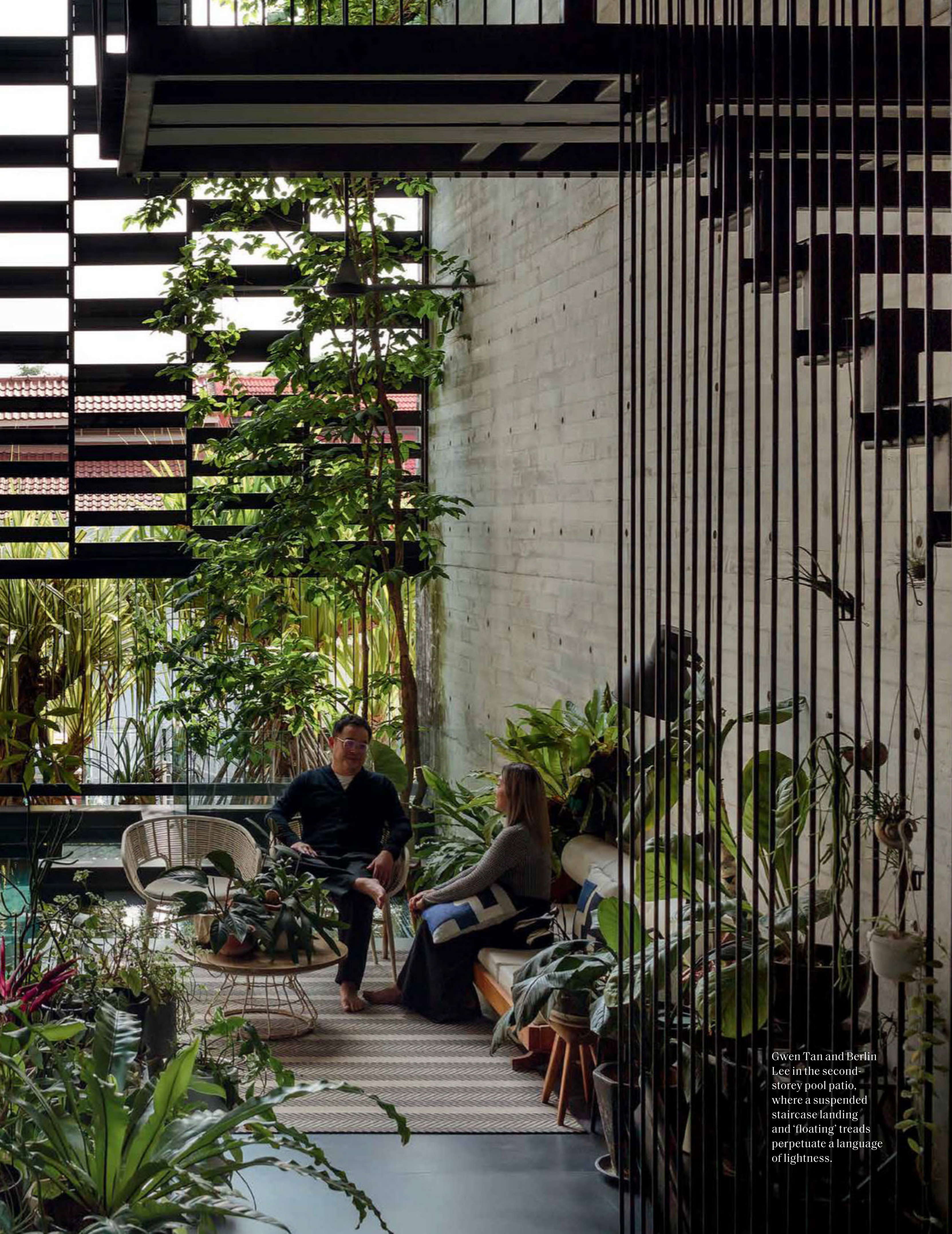
The *masseria* is a prelude of what is to come with his collaboration with The Lo & Behold Group, as they are planning a fine-dining concept to be launched next year. "When I joined them, I started to work on the fine-dining concept," he says, indicating that an upscale restaurant is usually the route most chefs take first. "But because we found this great spot at East Coast Park, we decided to go ahead with this casual restaurant first. I'm greatly inspired by it, so it doesn't matter which comes first." ●

SPECIAL THANKS TO SGPOLISHCHICKEN. GROOMING, LYDIA THONG/MAKEUP ENTOURAGE USING MAKE UP FOR EVER AND KEUNE HAIRCOSMETICS.

For the LOVE OF NATURE

Gwen Tan's house is an anomaly in Singapore's dwelling landscape of helmed-in concrete-and-glass edifices. Nature and its entire vicissitudes are warmly welcomed.

Photography SAYHER HEFFERNAN Words LUO JINGMEI



Gwen Tan and Berlin Lee in the second-storey pool patio, where a suspended staircase landing and 'floating' treads perpetuate a language of lightness.

Nature has always been part of Gwen Tan's world. Her childhood home was the genesis. "My house faced a plot of land with a tiny bungalow in the middle of an expansive, jungle-like garden; one could not see the existence of the bungalow, except faintly from the front gate as the vegetation was very overgrown," says the architect. Tan wears many hats. Aside from being a partner at Formwerkz Architects, she is also co-founder of interior design firm Studio iF and design principal of experience design firm Afternaut.

That neighbour's house is now a distant memory, having been sold and replaced with a condominium development. But it lives on in the form of her own abode, which she shares with her husband Berlin Lee, her teenage son Adan, her mother and mother-in-law. Here, Tan wakes to vistas of foliage outside the six-metre-long band of windows in her bedroom that overlooks a park. The view was a form of therapy during the COVID pandemic, when she found herself working long hours in the bedroom, drawn to the scenery. "The deep desire for a house where I could have that priceless, undisturbed green connection was most likely dictated subconsciously by the memory of that neighbour's house, where I could stare out of my bedroom at an alluring piece of 'wilderness', with sightings of monkeys, squirrels and rare birds," she recollects.

She has christened her home Open House as it engages wholeheartedly with the larger environment. Trendsetters would be quick to hail it as an exemplar of eco-living. That it is, but for Tan, it is the only way she can live. From the street, the entry is a fortified wall of timber panelling with only a sliver for the residents to peek out. But above the first storey, a pixelated skin of screens between off-form concrete party walls makes the house porous. Tall, feathery plants cap the car porch canopy as an introductory taste of the gardenscapes within.

Sunlight, wind and sounds of the neighbourhood penetrate the screens. The acoustic contribution is mutual. "While we benefited from the concrete walls amplifying the conversations within the house such that we can speak freely and audibly across floors, we realise that the street can hear when my son is not doing his homework! It has that ability to connect with the surroundings so much so that from the third storey, we can wave to friends and smell the rain hitting the hot tarmac. We also know when the green parrots are hanging out in the trees, or where the wild chickens are grazing just by listening out for their sounds," Tan muses.

The house's openness is encountered when one walks through the front door. A 10-metre-tall Memphat tree in a planter rises up a skylight that halos the tree in daylight and frames a patch of sky. The powder room is privy to this view, which sequences to a full-scale garden at the rear terrace. Backing the living room, it is a riot of viridescent shades that commingles into one stupendous living, growing canvas.

A shady and picturesque outdoor spot, this has been the venue of quite a few Sunday lunch barbecues. "Architecture sited in the tropics, especially homes, must be designed to embrace the climatic attributes. This house can 'breathe' very well," Tan shares, highlighting the well-ventilated interiors. On the second storey, the screens on the front façade become the backdrop to a 13-metre-long lap pool. Potted plants along the water's edge form a linear garden for Tan to indulge in her horticulturist habits. The pool sinks into the first storey as a floating white box above the open kitchen, with a round window as a playful round portal. "When I'm underwater, I have a view of the open park space beyond the house through this aperture," Tan lets on.

In the afternoon, when the fierce tropical light washes in, the presence of the screen is augmented with mosaicked shadows cast onto the concrete walls and still pool water. These theatrical silhouettes and the warm sun make swimming on late afternoons

“I like the *sound of the water* gently *echoing in the space* and the *frequent sighting* of birds that come in *through the screens.*”

THIS PAGE
Gwen in the rear terrace with her plants.

FACING PAGE
FROM TOP
On the living room console is a platform carved by Japanese timber artist Sumio Suuki and artwork by Shi Fei.

An artwork by South African artist Peter Clark in the master bedroom by a window overlooking a park.

Gwen customised a base for a wall lamp from Luceplan that can swivel to accommodate different lighting conditions.

In the living room, a sofa from B&B Italia and armchairs from A Thousand Tails.

an enticing weekend family activity. "I like the sound of the water gently echoing in the space and the frequent sighting of birds that come in through the screens. Sunbirds have made many nests on my hanging plants from the sun lounge room suspended above the pool. A cuckoo bird has made it a point to drop by almost every day to perch on the screen, either looking in or glancing out from a high point," describes Tan on visiting fauna.

The bedrooms are stacked on the rear end of the plot, where it is cooler. They enjoy internal views of this semi-outdoor space, lit from above by skylights. Above the pool, there are plans for the greenhouse-like sun lounge to be a gym, surrounded by landscaping but currently, the abundant sunlight in this apex of the house makes it ideal for the occasional sunning of laundry. A wall of Jalousie windows facing the pool amplifies the presence of sunlight and wind in the atrium.

Tan spent the most time at home during the circuit breaker, and she sought comfort in quiet night swims. The office's weekly thematic Zoom lunch parties were also partaken at the poolside patio. This part of the house offers quiet respite, but it can also switch energies during pool parties when "a crazy array of inflatables are thrown in, including floating coasters for mojitos", Tan recalls with a laugh. On parties, the house has witnessed many. The couple are avid hosts. A row of glass-fronted cabinets stacked with novel teacups and tableware suggest care to the plating process.

"The house is totally bespoke to our lifestyle needs, allowing us to connect to the people who matter most to us. Sometimes, we throw parties and curate menus just to celebrate the harvest from the gardens: lemons, papayas, pineapples, pumpkin, mulberry, custard apples, passion fruit, bitter gourd, assorted leafy vegetable, just to name a few," Tan enumerates. The mention of her edible garden resurrects more fond memories. "Growing up in a landed home also means that I could experiment with growing edibles, rearing an array of animals and so forth. I remember cultivating different fruit and vegetables, bringing what we learnt from science class in school to hands-on experiments at home. We grew lady's fingers, honeydew, tomatoes, basil, chilli, groundnuts and potatoes. We also had seven chickens that laid eggs for us apart from more exotic animals like squirrels, many varieties of birds and always three dogs simultaneously. It's like I grew up in a farm," laughs Tan on her private menagerie.

Her greenery expanded during the pandemic, when she brought home plants from the office and they stayed, embellishing her poolside. "I also adopted plants from colleagues who couldn't care for them anymore," muses the accidental plant doctor. Tan obviously has green fingers. Some plants transplanted from her first home 18 years ago are still thriving. They include a Jungle Bush plant that has propagated several generations. "One particular pineapple plant only fruited after I moved into this house in 2014. Since then, I have introduced new pineapple plants to keep it company," she shares. Tan also enjoys discovering new and rare plants, a recent purchase being the sapling of the African Baobab tree.

The ample greenery colours the house's basic palette of warm and sleek, rough and smooth materials. In fact, Tan sees landscaping as another material, alongside the abundance of timber deployed. Ash timber screens and staircases stained black match the black mild steel structures, while an observant eye would seek out the subtle imprints of the brushed pine wood strips used to form the concrete party walls.

The house offers places of sun and shadow. It marries beauty with comfort, granted by passive cooling strategies

Table- and drinkware in glass-fronted cabinetry; above are *objets d'art* from travels, such as pendant lamps from Kyoto and a cast-iron ash tray from Sri Lanka.

On the dining room wall is an artwork by Singaporean artist Tay Bak Chiang.

integrated into the architecture. "Air that comes in from the front is cooled via the pool before it is distributed throughout the house. The slits in the skylight above the pool allow accumulated hot air to escape and in return, draw more air through the space,' Tan explains. When the windows in the bedrooms are opened, through breeze cools the interiors, enhanced by 16 fans distributed across the house.

"The open-concept kitchen is the only space on the first storey to be fitted with air conditioning to facilitate the temperature control needed for baking," says Tan. Hidden glass 'curtains' can be extended from the cabinetry and walls to enclose the space if needed. Tan and Lee are obviously gourmands. In fact, together with other partners, they founded the first bespoke cocktail bar Klee in 2007 and Bar Stories in 2010—a bar paired with a furniture retail concept, A Thousand Tales.

"That was when I was not yet a mother and could travel extensively to get inspiration. Back then, the retail and F&B scene wasn't that exciting so we decided to take on more 'hobbies' and created a bunch of vibrant F&B concepts," Tan shares. The furniture store came about from their love of mid-century modern design. When her partner who was in charge of operations grew her brood and could not commit to running the shop, they decided to close it. Some of the furniture found their way into her home, lending an organic sensibility that complements the greenery.

Tan and Lee met in school as architecture students. Before he had even graduated, Lee established Formwerkz in 1998 with two other classmates to work on an interior project. This later developed into the architecture firm that has become known for experimental and tropically attuned work, especially houses. In Ramp House for example, a path rises up the house's border as a running track for the children, while a tree punctuates the centre of Park House. "We picked a path rarely walked by others during those days, paving the way forward for those passionate enough to set up their own practice right out of school," says Tan, who joined the company later and started to date Lee after working closely together. Most fresh graduates would enter a firm to gain experience as a first step, so this means the four brave, young architects learnt as they went.

"I always remember my wedding speech, where I thanked my three 'husbands' I had spent so much time with that I ended up converting one of them as my sleeping partner," Tan jests. Lee, one of the co-founders of Afternaut, now spearheads the business development of Formwerkz. "We believe that through our design methodology, we are able to create purposeful and sustainable works that bring about a positive impact," expounds Tan.

On the home front, the couple have embraced a new project. They have bought the plot next door and are extending their dwelling sideways. "Every level will have two connections to the existing house, and the connection detail, as well as vertical circulation, will differ from floor to floor. In a way, it is like designing a degustation menu, where ingredients are paired to complement one another," she explains. Aside from a lift for easier access, it will also accommodate space for Tan's father who will move in with them. (Tan's mother lives with her to look after Adan and her father lives in the family home while coming for meals daily.) It will also have more room for each family member's hobbies: Tan's dad is also an avid horticulturist, her mum runs culinary classes and a speciality home catering business with her aunt, and Lee hankers after a wine cellar.

And for sure, the magnification of space will allow Tan to exercise her green thumbs even more. "Double gardens, another greenhouse and rooftop farm for me," she reveals with glee. ●

STYLING, JASMINE ASHVINKUMAR; HAIR AND MAKE-UP, ANGEL GWEE USING NARS AND DAVINES; STYLIST'S ASSISTANT CARMEN SIN.

Wearable WORLD

Metaverse expert and technology futurist **Cathy Hackl** looks into the future of AR wearables—and how they might transform the fashion world sooner than we think.

As told to CHANDREYEE RAY AND JESSLYN LYE

Augmented reality (AR) may not be new to fashion, but if you ask technology leaders, it's all set to take over. In 2017, Apple CEO Tim Cook spoke with British *Vogue* about the future of fashion. In the interview, Cook said he believed AR would eventually transform everything in the fashion industry, from runway shows to shopping. "If you think about a runway show in the fashion world, that's a great application of AR... you want to see the dress all the way around, you do not want to just see the front."

Fast forward to today and it might be worth noting that fashion brands are already taking advantage of AR technology—and that we probably have interacted with it, either in-store or from the comfort of our homes. AR-powered shopping experiences, for example, make it easier for customers to make purchasing decisions. Using high-quality images and software to create 3D models of their products, brands hope to make virtual try-ons as realistic and accurate as possible.

As consumers, we may have used AR on our phones to virtually swatch a new shade of lipstick or see how a piece of furniture fits in our home. But what comes after the mobile phone? The real challenge—and the next frontier—lies in creating a high-quality wearable that is easy to use, comfortable to wear, immersive and fashionable.

Technology start-up Humane, which was founded by Apple's former director of design Imran Chaudhri, chose a Business of Fashion event last year to do its first public talk. There, Chaudhri shared that he sees a future that is heads-up and screenless. He said: "Imagine you're walking down the street and you see someone wearing a pair of sneakers that you really like. Now, imagine being able to get instant answers to any question you might have—who designed it? How do I buy it? Is it available in my size?"

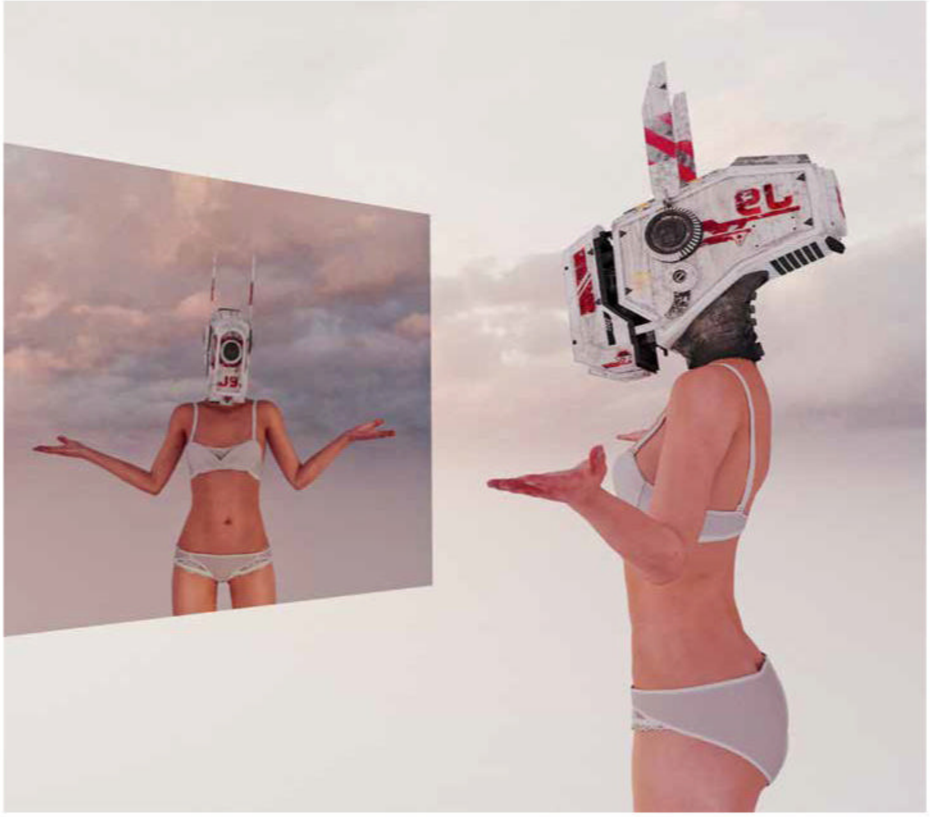


IMAGE GETTY

> "The *wearable of the future* will have to be a *technological marvel* firmly rooted in *style.*"

Some products on the market, such as Google Glass, Microsoft HoloLens, Magic Leap 2 and Snapchat Spectacles, have not been part of the fashion narrative. Meta's smart wearables play, however, turned that on its head. The technology giant partnered with Ray-Ban's parent company, EssilorLuxottica, to launch Ray-Ban Stories—a range of smart eyeglasses and sunglasses that allows wearers to shoot videos and photos, listen to music or take calls hands-free. It's not AR, but Meta has said that it's a stepping stone towards a world it sees in our future, where AR-equipped wearables are the norm.

I've often talked about what I call the Ray-Ban moment. This is the moment when the wearable that replaces smartphones becomes as sleek and fashionable as a pair of Ray-Bans. In order for people to want to wear this on their faces or bodies while they shop on the high street, the wearable of the future will have to be a technological marvel firmly rooted in style.

Whether it is a chic new pair of AR glasses or a screenless device, what replaces the mobile phone remains to be seen. But one thing is certain—the fashion industry is ripe for transformation. Fashion has already been impacted by gaming in ways that many didn't foresee, and while it may take a few years for a new wearable to go mainstream, the industry must continue adapting to the future of AR. The post-smartphone era, if it truly is screenless the way Chaudhri envisions, will hopefully enhance our human experience—with technology moving to the background and fashion regaining more of its magic. ●

Casino de Monte-Carlo.

Le Petit PRINCE

Surrounded by culture and history in Monaco, one solo traveller falls in love with the pristine country.

Words CHANDREYEE RAY

In the country of Monaco, you'll find the heart of a small town. Small it certainly is—with a total area of 2.1 square kilometres, Monaco is one of the smallest sovereign states in the world, second only after Vatican City. With over 36,000 inhabitants, the country also happens to be the most densely populated.

Yet, thanks to slick urban-planning and a geographical landscape that allows it to build upwards (often directly into hills and cliffs) rather than outwards, rarely when walking down the serene streets do you get the sense that Monaco is crowded. Often, you feel alone in your own world.

When I arrived for my week-long stay in autumn last year, the weather was hovering around 16 degrees in the daytime. In the afternoon, it was pleasantly cool walking down the streets in a light jacket and unlined trousers, especially with the golden rays of sunshine gently warming my back.

As evening fell, the temperature would dip below six degrees. This was the time of day when the ladies of Monaco would be out in their best—Chanel tweed jackets and woollen Burberry coats were paired with smart blouses and silk skirts. On their feet, you'd see sheer stockings tucked into stylish stilettos.

No matter how well you were dressed, or how fancy your evening would shape up to be, in Monaco, taking the bus is *de rigueur* for anyone and everyone. The public transport system is as efficient as it is accessible (two to three months of the year, everyone rides the bus for free in a country-wide attempt to go green by reducing the number of cars on the road). There's a bus stop on every corner and bus schedules are adhered to strictly. Crime rates are low and you'll see many a friendly face when you're out and about. Not once during my stay, no matter how late the hour, did I feel unsafe wandering about on my own, even though I could barely recognise my surroundings in a brand-new country.

The streets of Monaco are uniquely identifiable. The architecture—not entirely exclusive to the country in style, since it borrows elements from close neighbours France and Italy—stands out because of how pristinely buildings and landmarks have been maintained. In Monte-Carlo, Monaco's most emblematic district, sits a number of Belle Époque buildings characterised by sweeping arches, stained glass windows and hulking domed tops. The utterly glamorous Opéra de Monte-Carlo's cream-coloured walls glimmer so brightly in the sun that it hurts to look at them, even as you trot down the neighbouring shopping streets in Carré d'Or, lined with luxury boutiques and whimsical souvenir shops.

To call Monaco an artistic country would be a laughable understatement. This is a country with entire parks dedicated to promoting art history and the work of contemporary artists. Fontvieille Park, which is fully accessible throughout the day, holds within it a staggering number of sculptures acquired from various masters and prominent artists throughout history. Take a leisurely

The view from the
Fairmont Monte Carlo.

BELOW
Nobu Monte Carlo.

FACING PAGE
La Condamine Market.

stroll through any of the walkways (I recommend going in the daytime as several darker sculptures are difficult to appreciate in full detail through the dim night lights) and you'll spot at least 10.

Though many of the sculptures have been on display for decades, they remain in flawless condition thanks to the care taken in maintaining the public spaces. Even in residential districts such as La Condamine, the streets are beautiful and easy to walk along. No matter where you turn, there is a sight to see and architecture to admire.

But don't let my quaint descriptors fool you. Monaco also happens to be a bustling hub of technology and commerce. Its technological efforts are focused largely on sustainability and ocean conservation, the latter subject being a long-enduring interest of the ruling family in Monaco. Presently reigning is Prince Albert II, who ascended in April 2005, but it was his great-great-grandfather who first fell in love with the mysteries of the ocean.

Accordingly, Prince Albert II's passion project lies in the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation, a global non-profit organisation dedicated to environmental conservation. Each year, the foundation pays tribute to leading entrepreneurs, scientists and experts furthering the ecological cause with their work.

I had the privilege of attending the award ceremony during my visit. Held within a jaw-droppingly beautiful theatre in the Opera House, the foundation honoured three hand-picked candidates from around the world: Dr Agnès Kalibata from Rwanda, Professor Dame

Jane Francis from the UK and marine construction firm ECOncrete Tech from Italy.

The next day, on a blissful solo walk around the old town on the Rock of Monaco, I bumped into Kalibata doing some shopping. We had the most rousing chat about her important work as an agricultural scientist advocating for food security in Africa, and I came away more inspired than ever. Herein lies the magic of this petite, precious country. In the best way possible, when you're in Monaco, it's always a small world.

The message of environmentalism resonated with me even more keenly after my visit to the famous Oceanographic Museum, a deeply immersive aquarium-cum-museum chronicling the history and science behind ocean conversation through life-sized exhibits and impressive displays. It was at the museum gift shop that I picked up one of my favourite reads of 2022: *At The Heart of The Polar Worlds* by Robert Calcagno—a picturesque handbook about ocean conservation written by the chief executive of Monaco's Oceanographic Institute.

Of course, it was only when I got to my hotel room that night that I realised I had picked up a copy written in French instead of the version translated into English. Well, no matter—all I had to do was take a free bus ride up the scenic route to the museum and make an exchange. With any luck, I'd see the adorable dachshund I had already spotted twice on my trip again. You never really know in Monaco. ●

WHERE TO STAY

Fairmont Monte Carlo
Flush against the famous hairpin curve of the Monaco Grand Prix, this Fairmont is located minutes away from several iconic Monaco landmarks. It also offers great service, stunning views of the Mediterranean Ocean and stellar dining options, like Nobu.
12 Av des Spélugues, 98000 Monaco

Hôtel Hermitage Monte-Carlo
The epitome of an ultra-luxury stay in Monaco is Hôtel Hermitage. This sprawling, historic hotel is straight out of a fairy tale and might take you an entire afternoon to fully discover, with distinct halls dedicated to different design styles.
Sq Beaumarchais, 98000 Monaco

Columbus Hotel Monaco
For a slightly more budget-friendly option, consider a few nights at Columbus, a small but well-appointed hotel overlooking gorgeous views of Princess Grace Rose Garden in Fontvieille Park. The hotel's open-air Mediterranean restaurant, Tavolo, offers delicious food alongside refreshing cocktails.
23 Av des Papalins, 98000 Monaco

WHERE TO EAT

Pavyllon Monte-Carlo
For an unparalleled fine-dining experience, step into three-Michelin-starred chef Yannick Alléno's new restaurant in the heart of Hôtel Hermitage. Vibrant and lively, the restaurant serves exquisite food prepared with finesse but no pretension. Snag counter seats for a full view of the kitchen and it'll be a night to remember.

La Pêcherie U Luvassu
If you're looking to feast on the freshest seafood, pay a visit to this charming open-air restaurant along the port, minutes away from the Monaco Yacht Club. Family-run and serving fresh catches of each day, you'll find the most delicious fish, lobster and oysters here.

Tip-Top
Ask any native Monégasque their favourite burger joint and they'll point you to Tip-Top, a 60-year-old institution that stays open till six in the morning. If it's a post-bar craving you're looking to satisfy, the gargantuan burgers served with thinly sliced *frites* will be sure to hit the spot.

New VOICE

A year into being diagnosed with oral cancer and having a portion of her tongue removed, Singaporean actress **Janice Koh** tells Chandreyee Ray about the trauma of losing her superpower and the gift of finding joy again.

Photography SAYHER HEFFERNAN
Styling DESMOND LIM

Janice wears Max Mara 101801 Icon Madame coat; Simone Jewels Rockstar Solo ear cuff, Rockstar Synth unisex ring, Rockstar Lightning unisex ring and Edgy Double unisex ring.

Near the beginning of 2022, I discovered an ulcer on my tongue. One of those things you don't think very much about—a little painful and irritating, that's all. I saw a GP when it didn't go away after a few weeks and he gave me ulcer medication. When that failed to work, I visited my dentist. I had my own theory as to why I had a recurring ulcer—one of my teeth must have gone out of place and it was now scratching my tongue, leading to an abrasion. It was on my second visit to the dentist, after he had already filed my tooth down, that he told me quite seriously to see an oral surgeon.

I got a biopsy done immediately. The diagnosis came a week later: tongue cancer. Tongue cancer isn't a common cancer. I understand there is a specific demographic that tends to get it—men over 45 who smoke. I don't fall into that category. But there's no point in agonising over 'why' when it comes to cancer. Behind every case, there could be multiple factors, not just one cause.

My diagnosis filled me with regret. Why had I wasted months in between noticing the ulcer and finally getting it checked out? I had delayed proper medical attention because I was travelling, working and life had gotten in the way. It had never crossed my mind that it could be something serious.

When it comes to cancer, the approach to treatment is unique to each patient, depending on the stage of the disease. My ulcer appeared small, so the plan was to surgically remove it and radiate the surrounding areas in the event of any spread. Then, I'd be done.

After receiving the pathology report from my surgery, I sought a second opinion to verify that this treatment plan was the right one. My second set of doctors took no pleasure in telling me this, but they recommended a second surgery to make sure the margins were clear.

Anyone familiar with the cancer journey would understand that if a tumour is operable, doctors want to make sure that the margins are as clear as possible. You don't just remove the tumour, you remove the portion around it as a buffer, so as to reduce the chance of cancer cells spreading.

Of course, it was hard receiving such news—knowing that after all the progress I had made after my first surgery, I had to go back into the operating theatre for a second one.

Yet, it was a no brainer for me. Sitting there in the clinic, I told them to do what they needed to to give me the best chance of surviving this. It was a clarifying moment. My job was to live, not to act.

More than half my tongue has now been surgically removed. It's very obvious when I speak. I'm in speech therapy, and it is slowly improving over time. But I'm an actor—I can't help but have high expectations of myself when it comes to clarity and articulation.

Three weeks after my second surgery, I was shopping in a Lululemon store. You know how they ask for your name so they can write it on the door of the changing room? I had to repeat my name five times before I could be understood. I thought, 'Oh my god. If I can't even say my name, what am I going to do?'

Still, it's a small price to pay for being well. Even though there is a part of me that mourns and grieves for my voice, I'm learning to accept that there is a limit to how perfect my speech will be, since physiologically, my tongue has completely changed. Being able to accept that, to me, is part of the emotional recovery from the trauma of the illness.

> I'm *living* from *scan* to *scan*, so I don't *plan* too *far ahead* of time.

I try not to let it bother me. In fact, I try to talk to as many people as I can. Rather than isolate myself due to embarrassment or fear, I feel it's important for me to be social, to attend events or weddings, to meet friends and industry folk, so that everyone can get used to my new voice—and so that I can get used to it too.

I have no expectations of going back to work in front of a camera or on stage. It is something I am slowly letting go of. If it happens, that'd be great. But I have been performing for over 30 years now. My husband had said something to me very early on in this journey, when I was wondering if I could ever act again. He said: "We have so many other mountains to climb. Why do we feel the need to keep going back to this one mountain?"

His words made me question what I was clinging to and why. For those of us who are artists or creatives, our work is a huge part of our identity. It might be time for me to figure out—who am I outside my work? Am I willing to evolve? Am I willing to let go?

A month after my second surgery, I started six weeks of radiation. I also had adjuvant chemotherapy, which was explained to me as a way of enhancing the radiation treatment by targeting any cancerous cells that may have randomly moved to other parts of the body.

Radiation was five days a week, and the actual radiation process lasted only 10 minutes. You don't feel any pain. Similarly, the weekly chemotherapy I underwent was intravenous, so the drugs went straight into my body and I didn't feel anything.

The side effects always come after. In my case, my mouth slowly filled up with painful sores and ulcers. By the third week of radiation, it was becoming too difficult to eat solid food or even soup, so I went on a pure Ensure milk diet for the six weeks that followed.

As the treatment progressed and the side effects worsened, building a sense of daily routine became a vital way of maintaining calm and optimism. I meditated, I journalled, I jigsaw-ed, I read a lot of books. To avoid losing too much weight, I put myself on a strict schedule of drinking five to six packets of fortified milk a day. I would go for short walks to get fresh air and exercise. I said yes to having visitors twice or thrice a week because it made me happy to see my family and friends. I said yes when friends wanted to drive me to hospital or send me ice cream because I knew it was the only way they knew how to help, and I knew they so badly wanted to.

I joked with my directors, Ivan Heng and Ong Keng Sen, that my treatment journey was like being in a terrible theatre production where you hated the script and couldn't get along with your castmates. The show had to go on anyway, so what do you do? Put on your rehearsal clothes, suck it up and turn up every day. You'll get to the end eventually, why not find some joy along the way?

I am now roughly five months out of treatment. My scans have been clear. Cancer patients are most vulnerable in

Janice wears Michmika Longline trench coat; Simone Jewels Rockstar Synth unisex ring, Rockstar Lightning unisex ring and Edgy Double unisex ring.

Fashion assistants, Guo Lile and Cecilia Qi; hair and make-up, Zhou Aiyi/ Makeup Entourage

the first two years of cancer care, so the doctors monitor us closely for any relapses or recurrences. Who's to say what might happen? The verdict is still out.

I am privileged to have had most of my medical expenses taken care of by MediSave and insurance. That's something I will advocate to no end about, especially for people who are freelance or gig workers. If there's one thing you should be spending some money on, it's making sure you are well protected because that has allowed me the freedom to seek treatment, to rest, to not be stressed out about rushing back to work.

The timing of this illness is most ironic as I was awarded a knighthood by the French government literally weeks before I got my diagnosis. [Editor's note: In 2022, Koh was awarded the title of Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres (Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters) for significant contributions to the arts and literature.] I know there are many who are eager for me to get back on my feet—to get back on stage or to do some form of creative work. Perhaps we see work as a way of being productive, of not wasting talent and potential.

But I've spent so many years working. I work in theatre and television, where the hours are long. Since my sons were born, I have always felt like I didn't have enough time with them. I have missed birthday dinners and important family occasions because I was away at a theatre show or on a touring production.

Now, I feel like I'm making up for lost time. I'm home when the kids come back from school. I have time to drive them to places they need to go. We sit down for dinner together and talk about how their days went. This time to be present with my family is a real luxury. Even if it is under these circumstances, it is a gift.

I'm in a liminal space now where death doesn't feel as far as it once did. I'm living from scan to scan, so I don't plan too far ahead of time. These first few years after cancer are delicate.

It's become important for me to live my days well—and mindfully—irrespective of the outcome. I don't skip breakfast anymore. I do yoga, or a workout, or go on a hike in the morning. There is no fixed routine. Sometimes I spend my afternoons meeting up with friends. Sometimes I stay home, reading, doing a jigsaw or just pottering about. And I still find a lot of joy in going to the theatre. ●

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TAEYANG

As K-pop legend and veteran idol TAEYANG steps back into the limelight, he opens up about adapting to a new era of music and what he hopes to do in time to come.

Photography JUNGWOOK MOK
Fashion direction DESMOND LIM
Style direction GEE EUN
Words AZRIN TAN

Raf Simons by 10 Corso Como top; MCI Jewelry necklace; pants and belt, stylist's own

"It *would* be a lie if I said that there was *no pressure* to try these *new things* that I had *never* tried before."

THIS PAGE
Givenchy jacket, tops, pants, hats and Giv Cut necklace; shoes, stylist's own

FACING PAGE
1017 Alyx 9SM by Yoox overcoat and pants; Givenchy Lock earrings; T-shirt and boots, stylist's own

Raf Simons by 10 Corso Como top; MCI Jewelry necklace; pants and belt, stylist's own

There are only a few things in life that are as assured as the sun. Day after day, it peeks out over the horizon, begins to stream through cracks and windows and signals a new day. The sun, *taeyang* in Korean, yields itself to an easy metaphor for new beginnings. This is a metaphor which Dong Young-bae—better known as K-pop superstar TAEYANG or SOL in Japan—is no stranger to.

Over the past few years, TAEYANG has lived a relatively hushed life. After his solo world tour in 2017, he tied the knot with his partner Min Hyo-rin, whom he now shares a son with. Shortly after the wedding, the K-pop star enlisted into compulsory military service, delayed as a result of his stellar career as a member of one of the biggest groups in K-pop—BIGBANG.

As a part of the prominent quintet, TAEYANG became a part of K-pop's seismic rise to the global stage, with BIGBANG producing some of the greatest hits ever known to the industry. Title tracks such as 'Fantastic Baby' and 'Bang Bang Bang' broke numerous records in their heyday. Together, they set the standard for what the industry could look like; the paragons of K-pop that new-era groups would seek to emulate years later.

BIGBANG, which debuted in 2006, falls under the era of second-generation K-pop—alongside the likes of Girls' Generation and Shinee—and were whom younger, budding idols had aspired to become. From BTS and Blackpink to Stray Kids and Twice, many of the third- and fourth-generation idols have spoken of the fierce impact BIGBANG had on them in their trainee years. From their unparalleled stage presence to their experimental approach to musical production, they can be said to have laid the foundation for younger generations to break new ground in the K-pop scene.

However, with the release of his latest six-track album, *Down to Earth*, TAEYANG is ready to start anew. The build-up to his musical homecoming had been a staggering one; earlier in the year, the 34-year-old released 'Vibe' with the inimitable Jimin of BTS. Indeed, it had felt like a serendipitous encounter that saw the two industry titans come together and yet, there was no doubt that the high-octane dance anthem was a confident declaration of the venerable idol's surefire return to the scene.

Down to Earth feels like a tender confession. While previous albums such as *Solar* or *Rise* can be said to have given breath to the emboldening love ballads that he has become almost synonymous with—such as 'Wedding Dress' or 'Eyes, Nose, Lips'—his newest EP serves a considered platter of varied tunes that point to his musical influences from all over the world. A place where trap, soul and R&B meet, TAEYANG recounts the music he grew up listening to. "I am trying to express the music of the era I was most influenced by. Music in Korea from the '80s to the '90s is what I consider to be the golden era of Korean music," he muses.

The singer admits that the EP launch had its ups and downs. When asked what led to its initial conception, he says that the album found its roots almost five years ago, when he was serving in the military and was devoid of inspiration. "I was mostly focused on my daily activities at the time and wasn't able to listen to music nor gain any inspiration. Outside of my army duties, I was also going through some tough situations."

But it was in these troubling times that he found meaning again. Coincidentally, TAEYANG felt inspired by an altered view of his namesake, the sun. "I started to feel solace and comfort through the beautiful sunsets. As this became something I looked forward to daily, I started to reflect and look at my life from a different perspective, and began running every day when the sun was setting," he explains. "I felt that my situation in life was similar to the setting sun because the sunset doesn't greet the morning, it greets the night. I saw myself in the sunset because I was facing a dark situation in my life too."

If *Rise* is associated with the everlasting promise of sunrise, then perhaps *Down to Earth* serves as a humbling reminder that at times, the sun must first go down before it can rise again. Embracing his moniker with a renewed vision, TAEYANG acknowledges that the difficulties faced during those years had been a tipping point. "From here on, I could start on a new approach and return to my original self—just as a human being," he says thoughtfully. "I could sincerely feel 'down to earth' and organically build this album step by step with this new mindset."

It comes as no surprise, though, that we live in times when a great K-pop comeback cannot rely on a new album alone. Apart from the accompanying breadth of smooth choreographies and the scintillating stage performances, the K-pop scene has been propelled into a new realm—where TikTok dance challenges and candid behind-the-scenes captures are imperative for third- and fourth-generation groups to increase the promotion for their music.

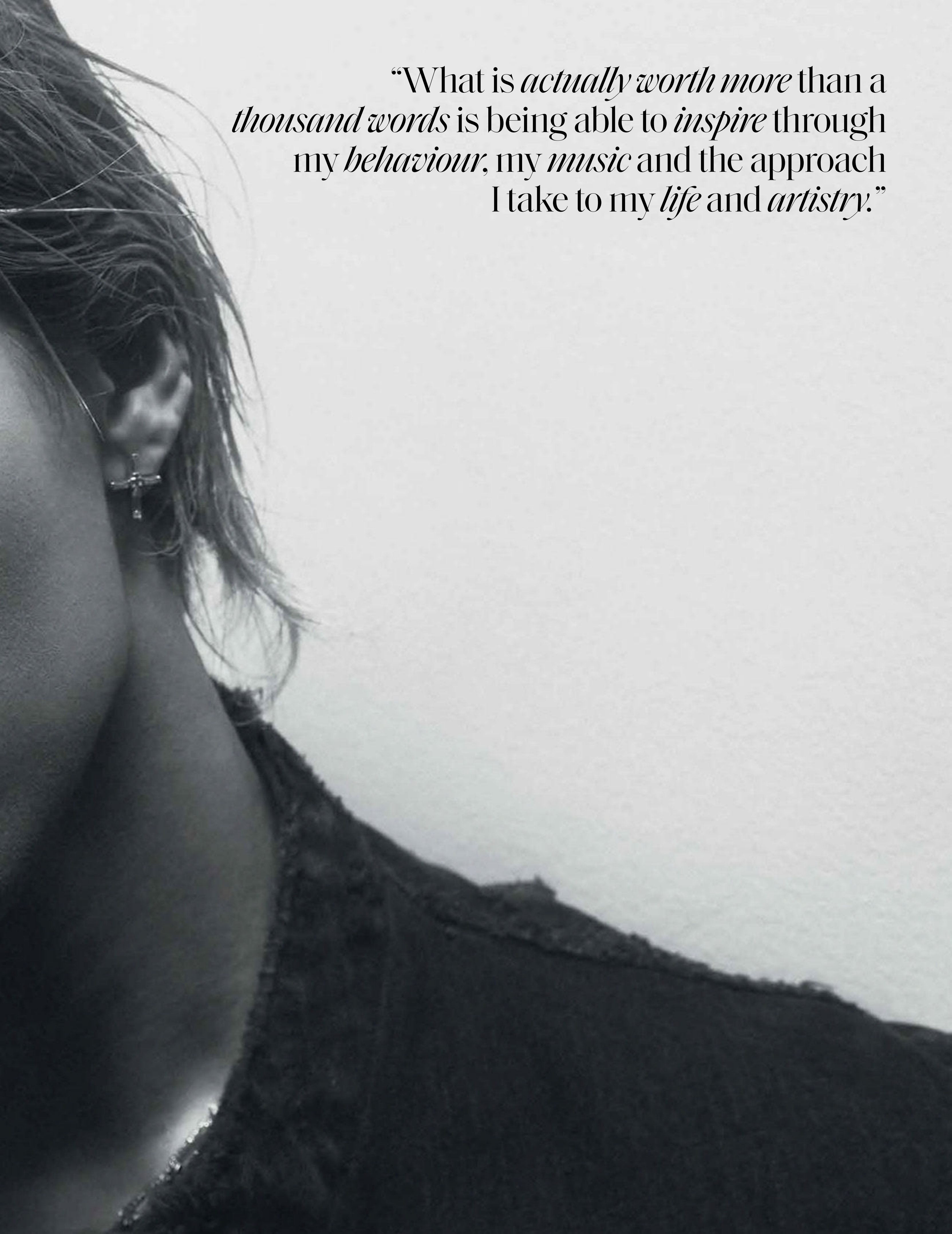
"I was exposed to third and fourth generations of K-pop idols through other soldiers when I was in the army and so I learnt more about how their generation was culturally different from me," TAEYANG says. He's hardly resistant to this change, openly admitting to the fact that his military time was also an eye-opening experience that kept him in touch with the times. He adds: "I became curious about how they approach things. Through my daily interactions with them, I began to understand more about the different trends or platforms they were interested in."

When it comes to these new means of promoting his music, TAEYANG shares that participating in dance challenges and the like was something he wanted to embrace, but not without initial hesitation—even though he was often praised for his stylistic dance moves. "I opened up to the idea of trying dance challenges or partaking in new platforms, but it would be a lie if I said that there was no pressure to try these new things that I had never tried before. When I actually tried it though, it was easier than I thought," he says.

Despite a willingness to adapt to the times and collaborate with industry heavyweights, TAEYANG remains visibly focused on presenting an honest side of himself through his music. He effuses a quiet confidence when I ask him if he has any advice for the new generation of aspiring artists. "Instead of giving advice, what is actually worth more than a thousand words is being able to inspire through my behaviour, my music and the approach I take to my life and artistry," he ruminates.

Finally, there's no doubt that a large part of TAEYANG's return to the K-pop scene is for his fans. In many of his answers to my questions, it is obvious that the motivations for his comeback are wonderfully simple. He sums it up: "Through this album, I want to plant a new seed with my fans so that we can grow a tree and start new memories together by meeting more often in various places." ●

Gallery Dept by Mue
jacket; MCI Jewelry
ring and necklace



“What is *actually worth more* than a *thousand words* is being able to *inspire* through my *behaviour*, my *music* and the approach I take to my *life* and *artistry*.”

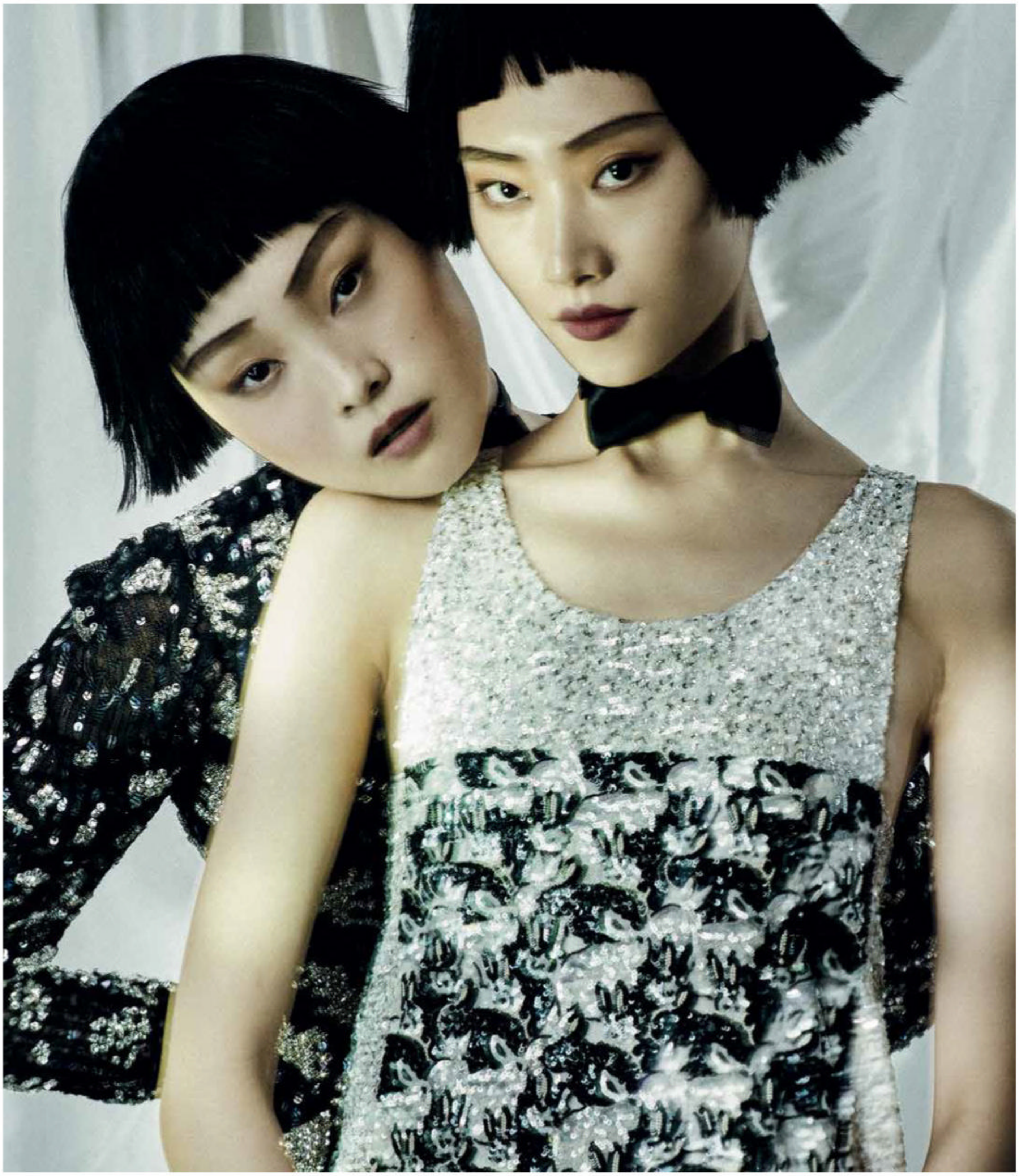
THIS PAGE
Séfr by 10 Corso Como
shirt jacket

FACING PAGE
Rick Owens top and
jacket; Vetements
shoes; pants,
stylist's own

Etro top; pants and shoes, stylist's own

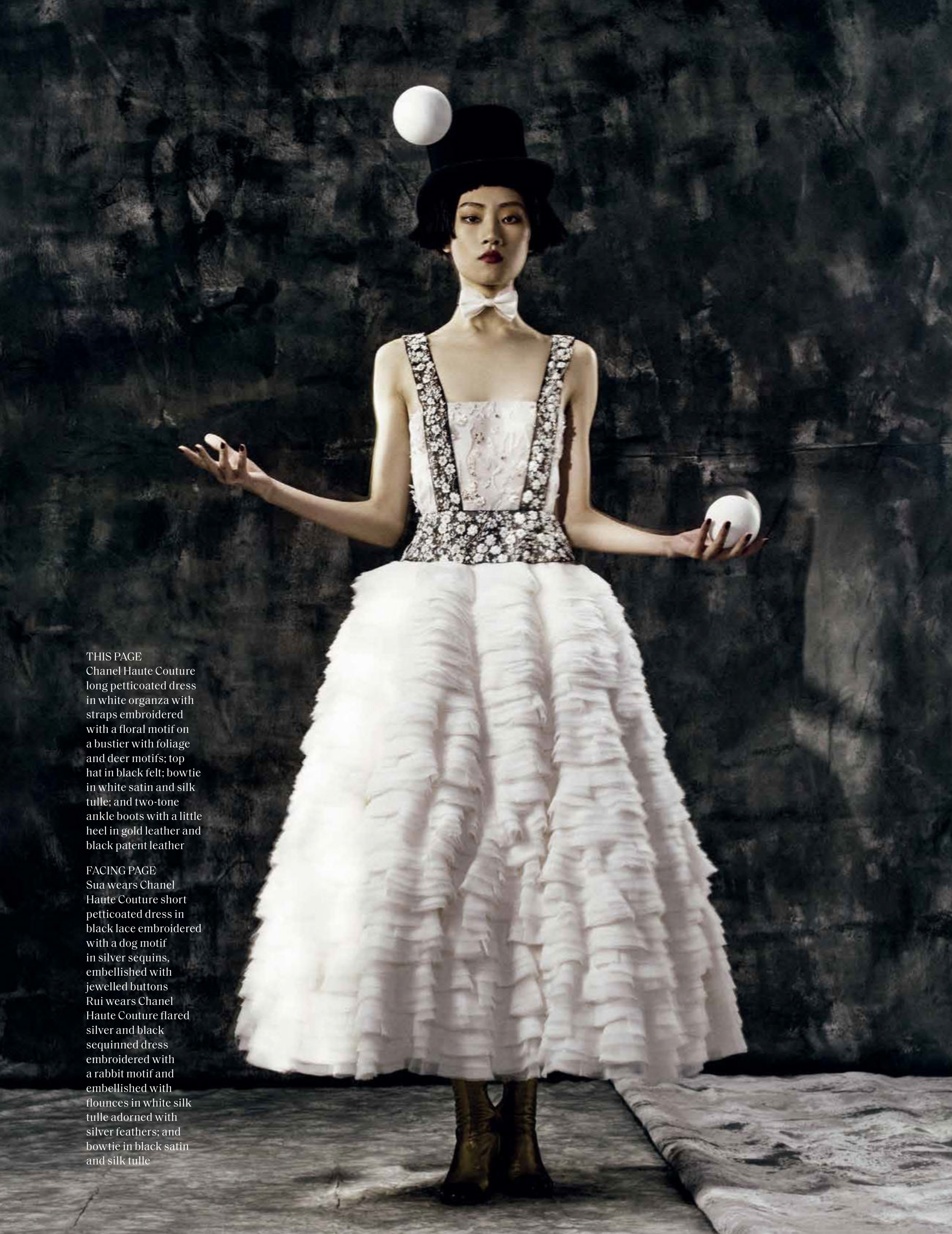
Hair, Hyunwoo Lee; make-up, Heakyung Lim; creative producer, Vanessa Caitlin; visual director, Seajun Kim; set stylist, Dohyung Kwon; production, Danny Kang.

PHANTASMAGORIA



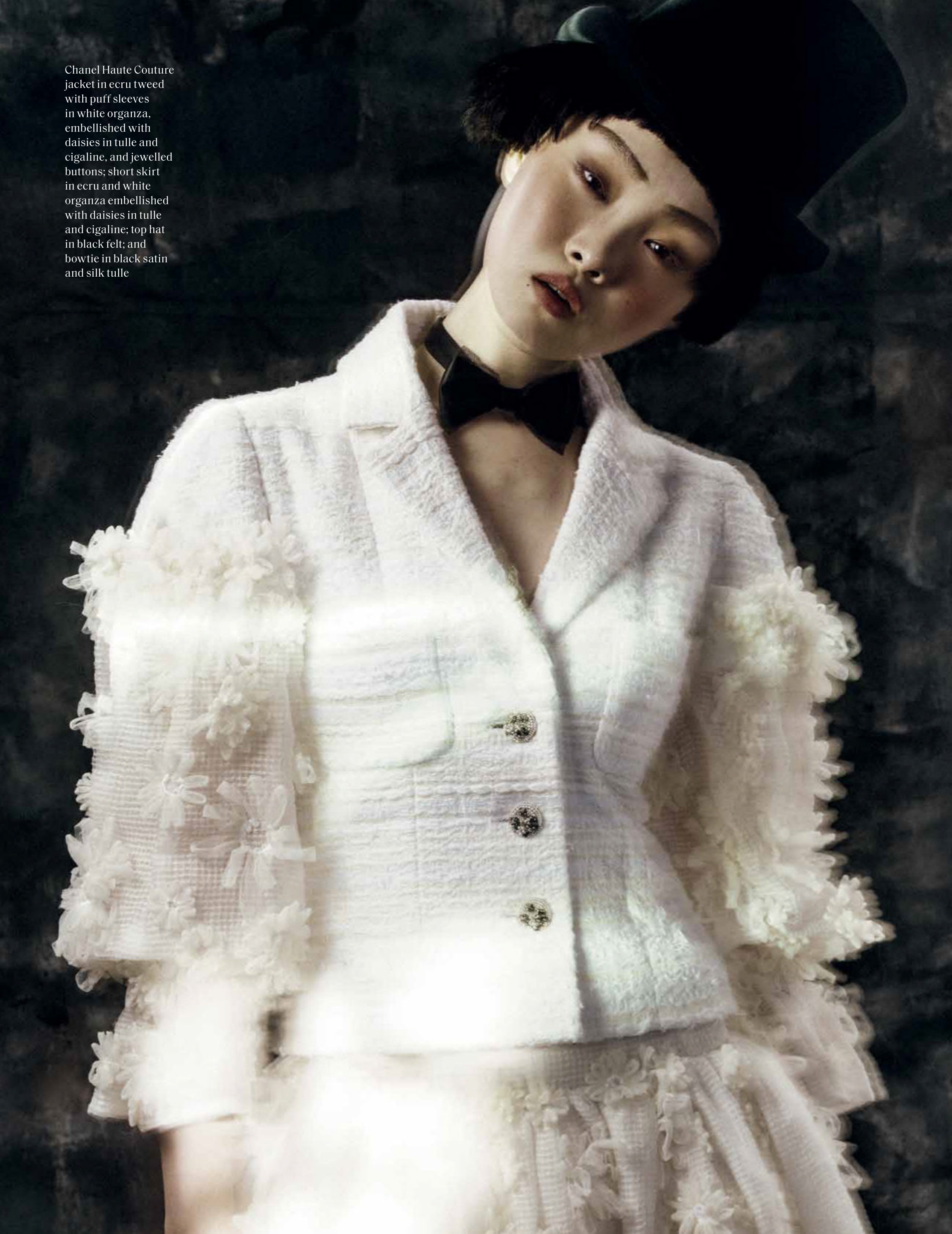
Revel in the carnivalesque fantasy of Chanel's spring/summer 2023 haute couture universe, presented through a poetic parade of sequins and lace.

Photography ZANTZ HAN Styling JASMINE ASHVINKUMAR



THIS PAGE
Chanel Haute Couture long petticoated dress in white organza with straps embroidered with a floral motif on a bustier with foliage and deer motifs; top hat in black felt; bowtie in white satin and silk tulle; and two-tone ankle boots with a little heel in gold leather and black patent leather

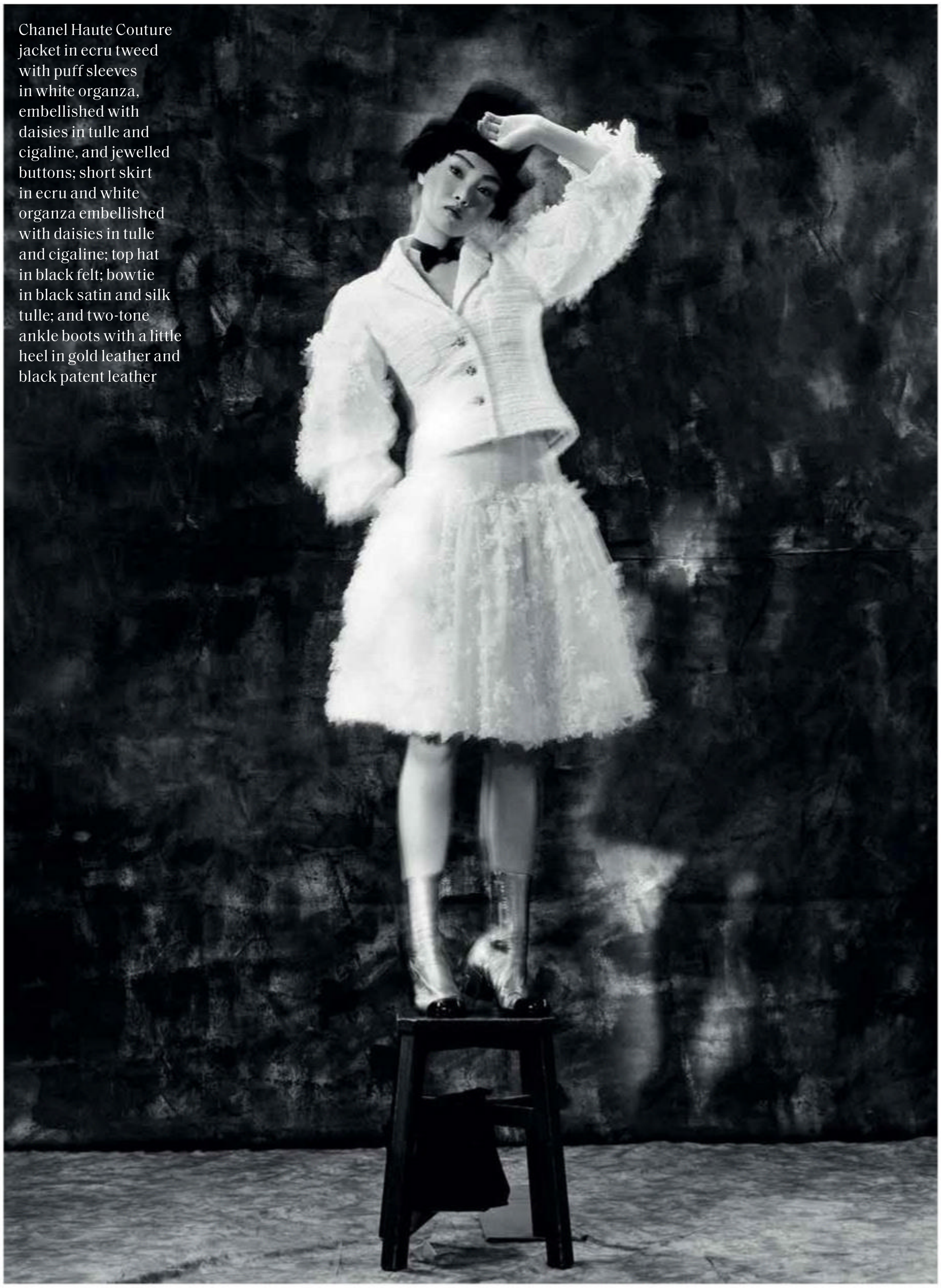
FACING PAGE
Sua wears Chanel Haute Couture short petticoated dress in black lace embroidered with a dog motif in silver sequins, embellished with jewelled buttons
Rui wears Chanel Haute Couture flared silver and black sequinned dress embroidered with a rabbit motif and embellished with flounces in white silk tulle adorned with silver feathers; and bowtie in black satin and silk tulle



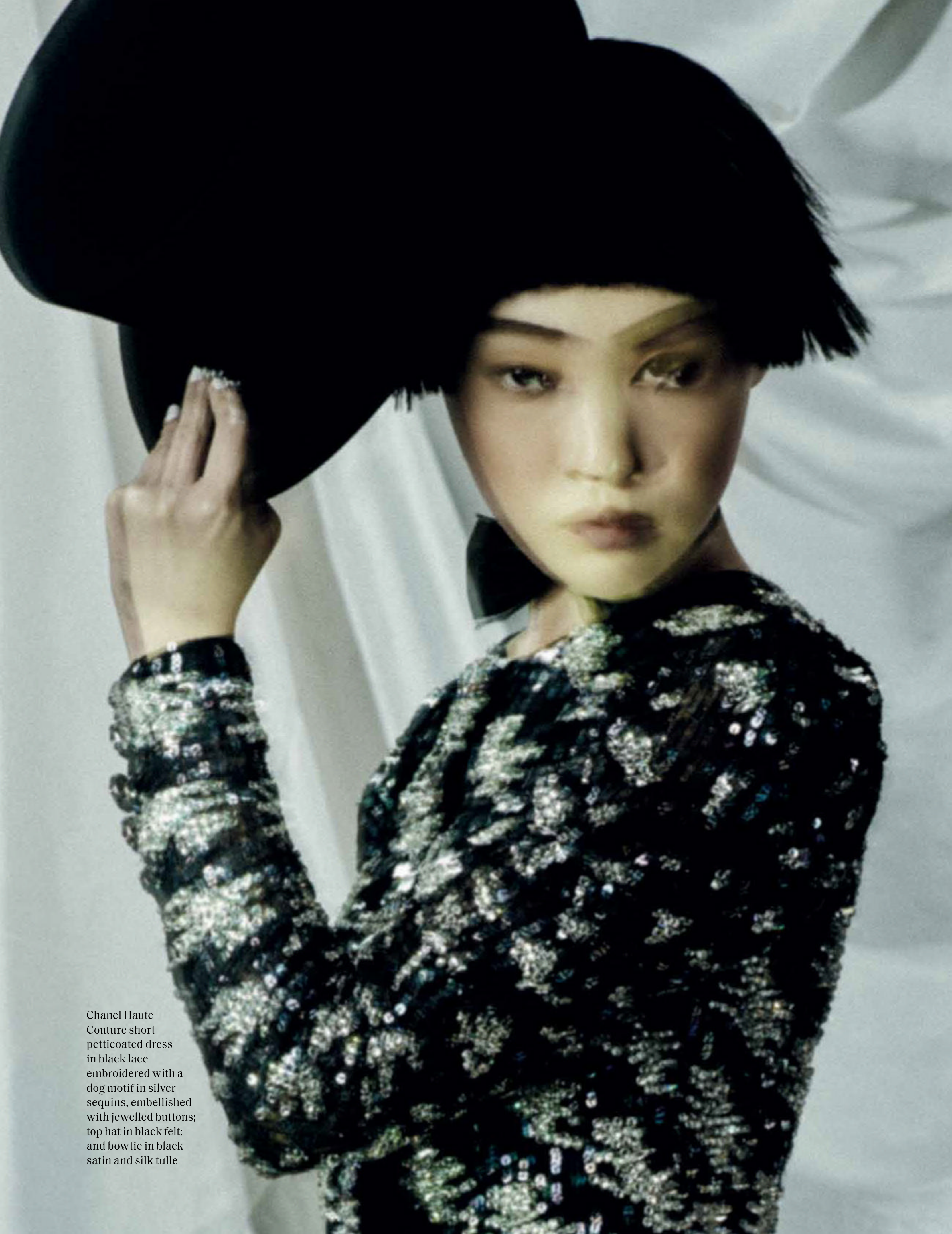
Chanel Haute Couture jacket in ecru tweed with puff sleeves in white organza, embellished with daisies in tulle and cigaline, and jewelled buttons; short skirt in ecru and white organza embellished with daisies in tulle and cigaline; top hat in black felt; and bowtie in black satin and silk tulle

Chanel Haute Couture jumpsuit in black lace ennobled with painted multicolour floral motifs, embellished with embroidered braid and jewelled buttons; bowtie in black satin and silk tulle; and two-tone ankle boots with a little heel in gold leather and black patent leather

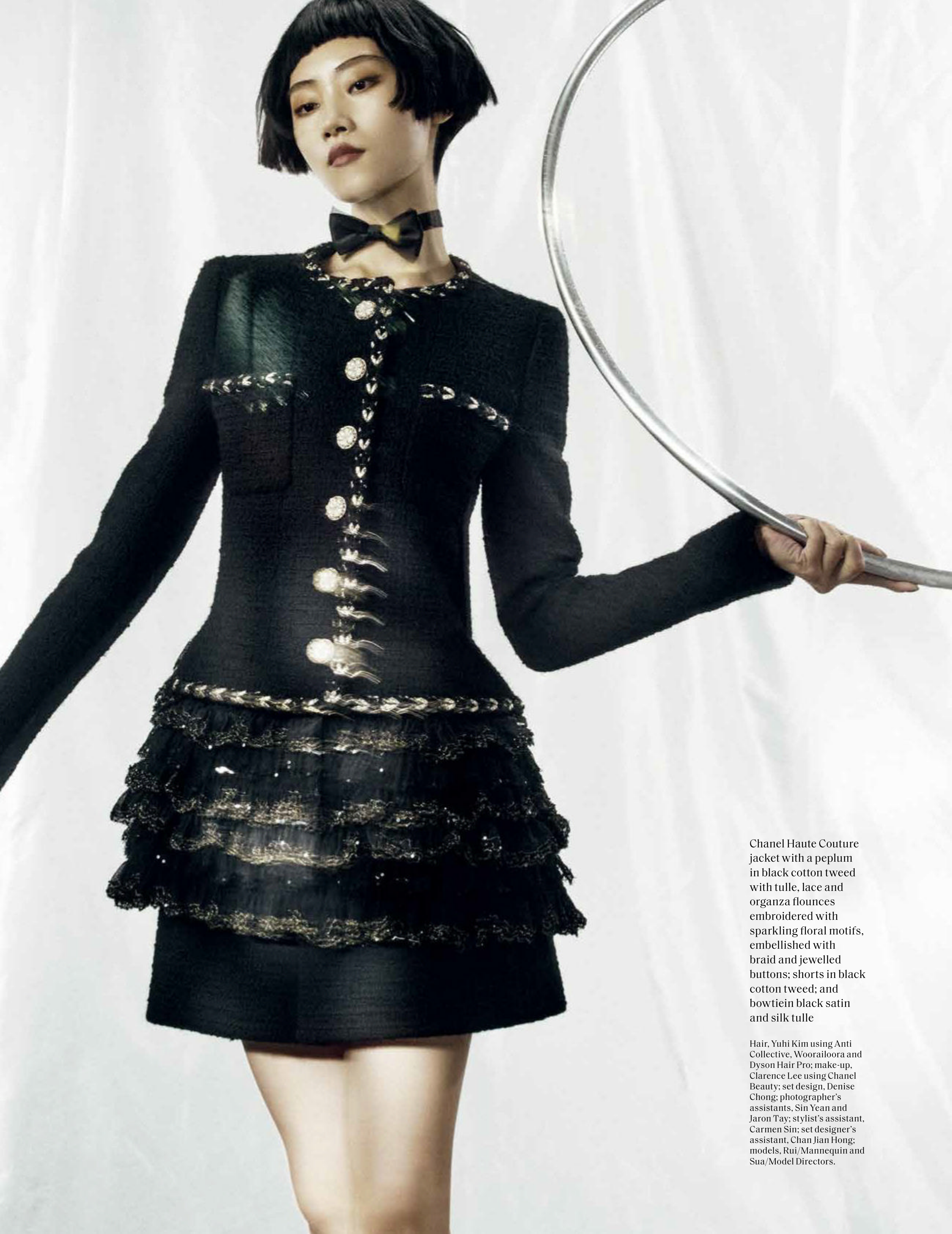
Chanel Haute Couture short dress in white *crêpe* georgette embroidered with swallows and embellished with flounces; veil in white tulle embroidered with swallows; bowtie in white satin and silk tulle; and two-tone ankle boots with a little heel in gold leather and black patent leather



Chanel Haute Couture jacket in ecru tweed with puff sleeves in white organza, embellished with daisies in tulle and cigaline, and jewelled buttons; short skirt in ecru and white organza embellished with daisies in tulle and cigaline; top hat in black felt; bowtie in black satin and silk tulle; and two-tone ankle boots with a little heel in gold leather and black patent leather

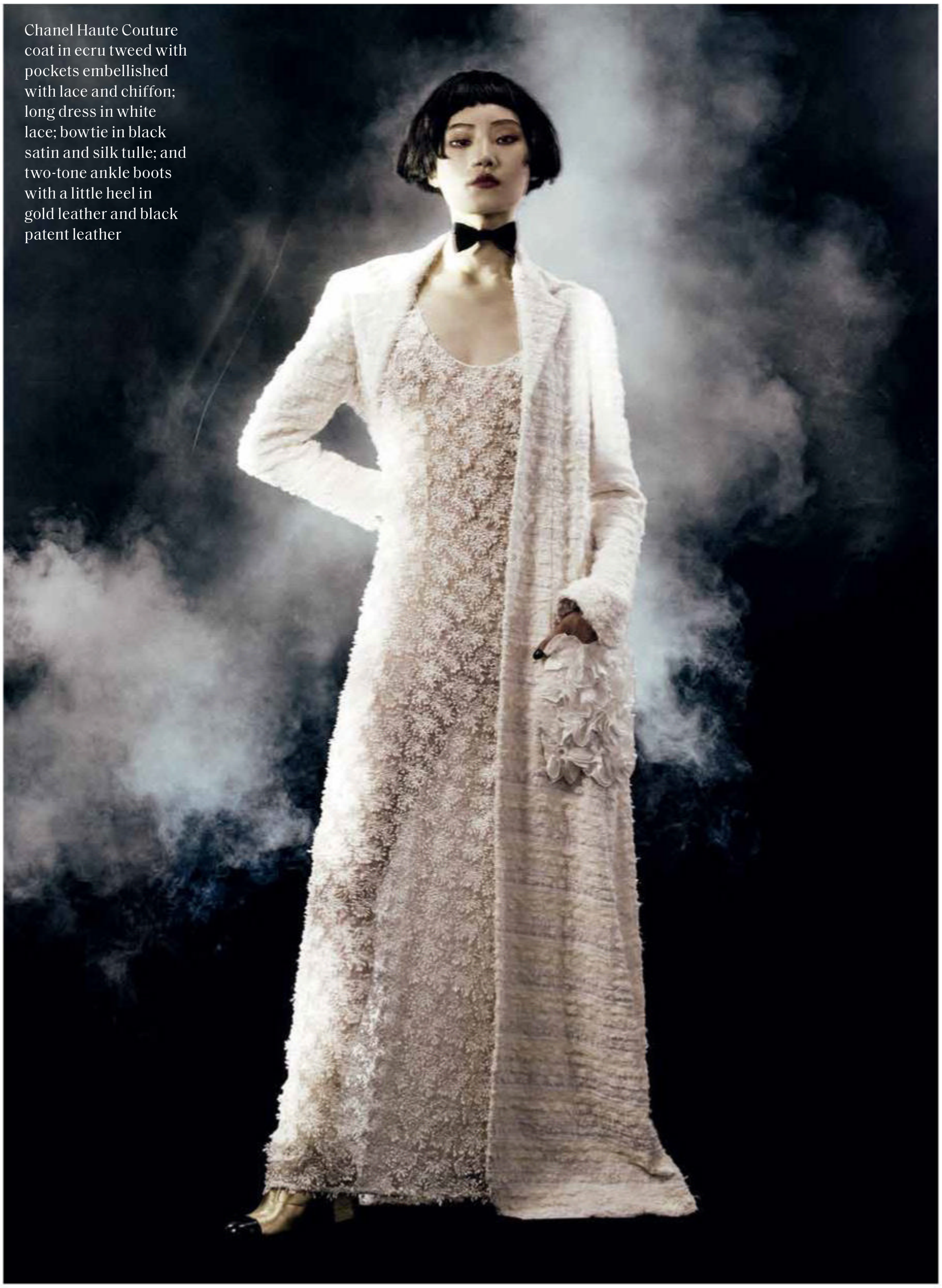


Chanel Haute Couture short petticoated dress in black lace embroidered with a dog motif in silver sequins, embellished with jewelled buttons; top hat in black felt; and bowtie in black satin and silk tulle



Chanel Haute Couture jacket with a peplum in black cotton tweed with tulle, lace and organza flounces embroidered with sparkling floral motifs, embellished with braid and jewelled buttons; shorts in black cotton tweed; and bowtiein black satin and silk tulle

Hair, Yuhi Kim using Anti Collective, Woorailoora and Dyson Hair Pro; make-up, Clarence Lee using Chanel Beauty; set design, Denise Chong; photographer's assistants, Sin Yean and Jaron Tay; stylist's assistant, Carmen Sin; set designer's assistant, Chan Jian Hong; models, Rui/Mannequin and Sua/Model Directors.



Chanel Haute Couture coat in ecru tweed with pockets embellished with lace and chiffon; long dress in white lace; bowtie in black satin and silk tulle; and two-tone ankle boots with a little heel in gold leather and black patent leather

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Fendi *haute fourrure* cape from spring 2016; Aquazzura heels

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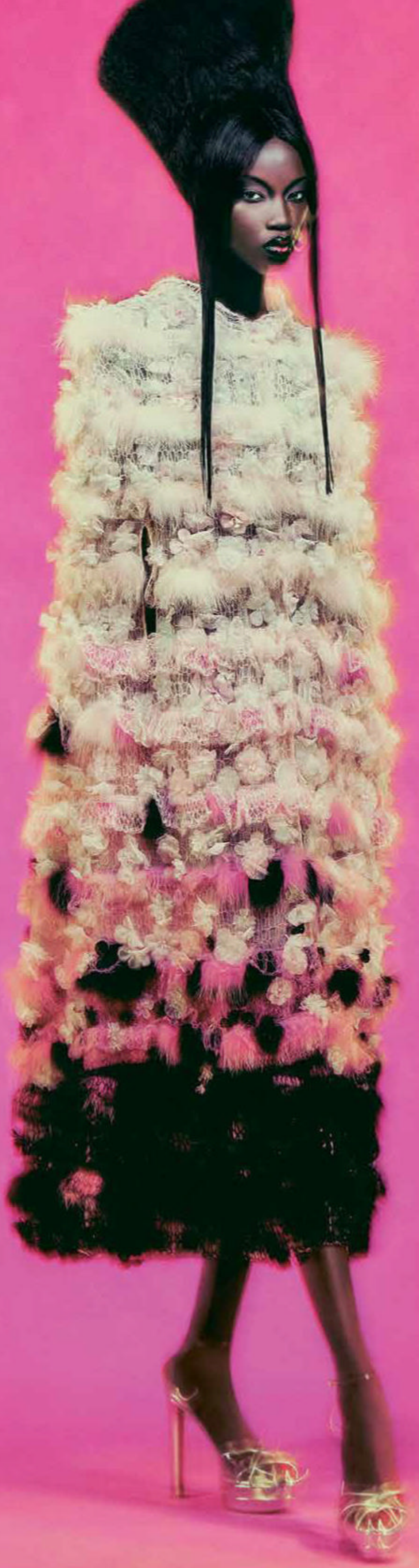
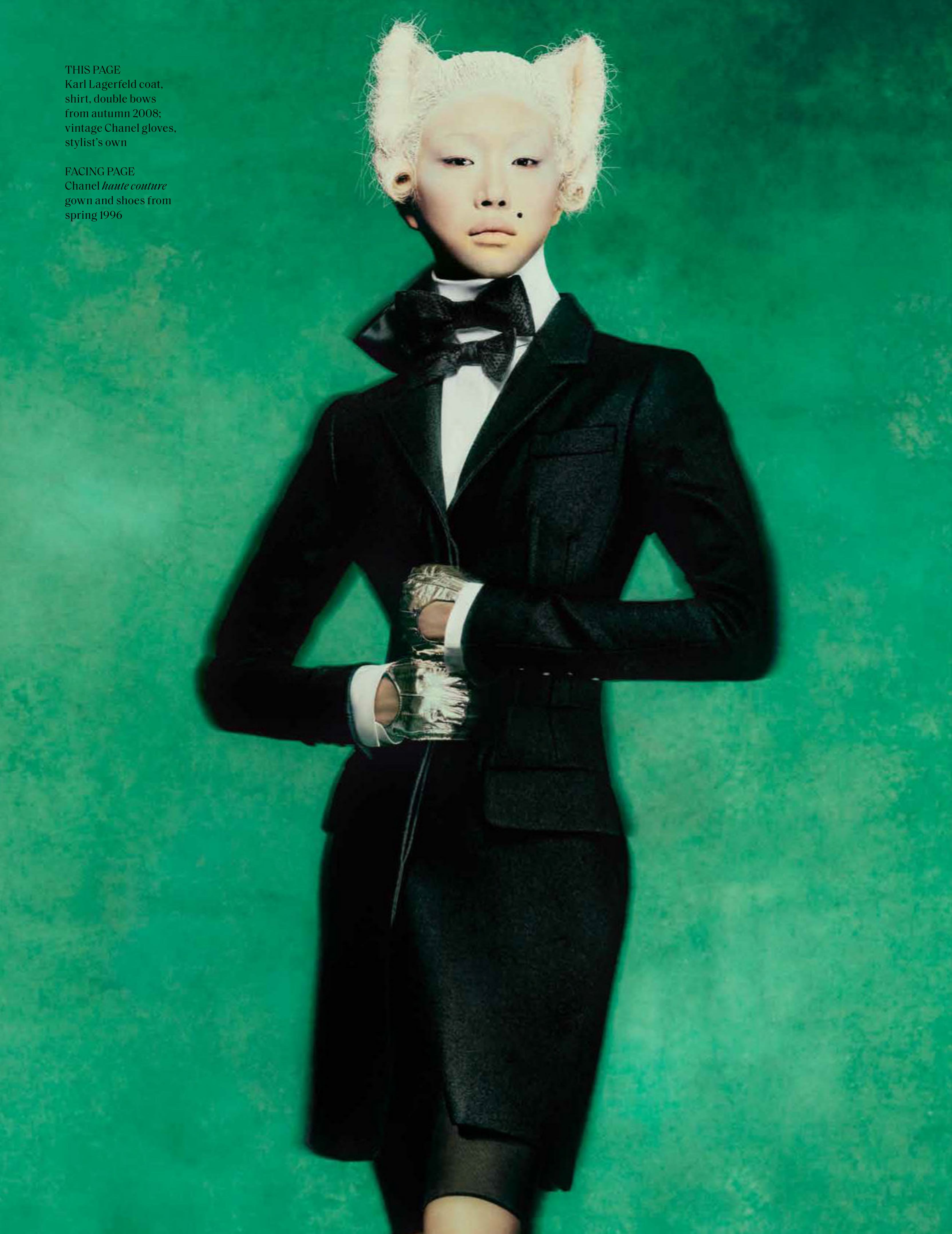
Chanel *haute couture* skirt suit from spring 1995



IN THIS IMAGE: HAIR, SOICHI INAGAKI; PRODUCTION, RAGI DHOLAKIA PRODUCTIONS; SET DESIGN, IBBY NJOYA.

THE LINE OF TIME

Photography RAFAEL PAVAROTTI Styling AMANDA HARLECH



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Karl Lagerfeld coat, shirt, double bows from autumn 2008; vintage Chanel gloves, stylist's own

FACING PAGE
Chanel *haute couture* gown and shoes from spring 1996

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Chanel Metiers d'Arts
gown from 2002

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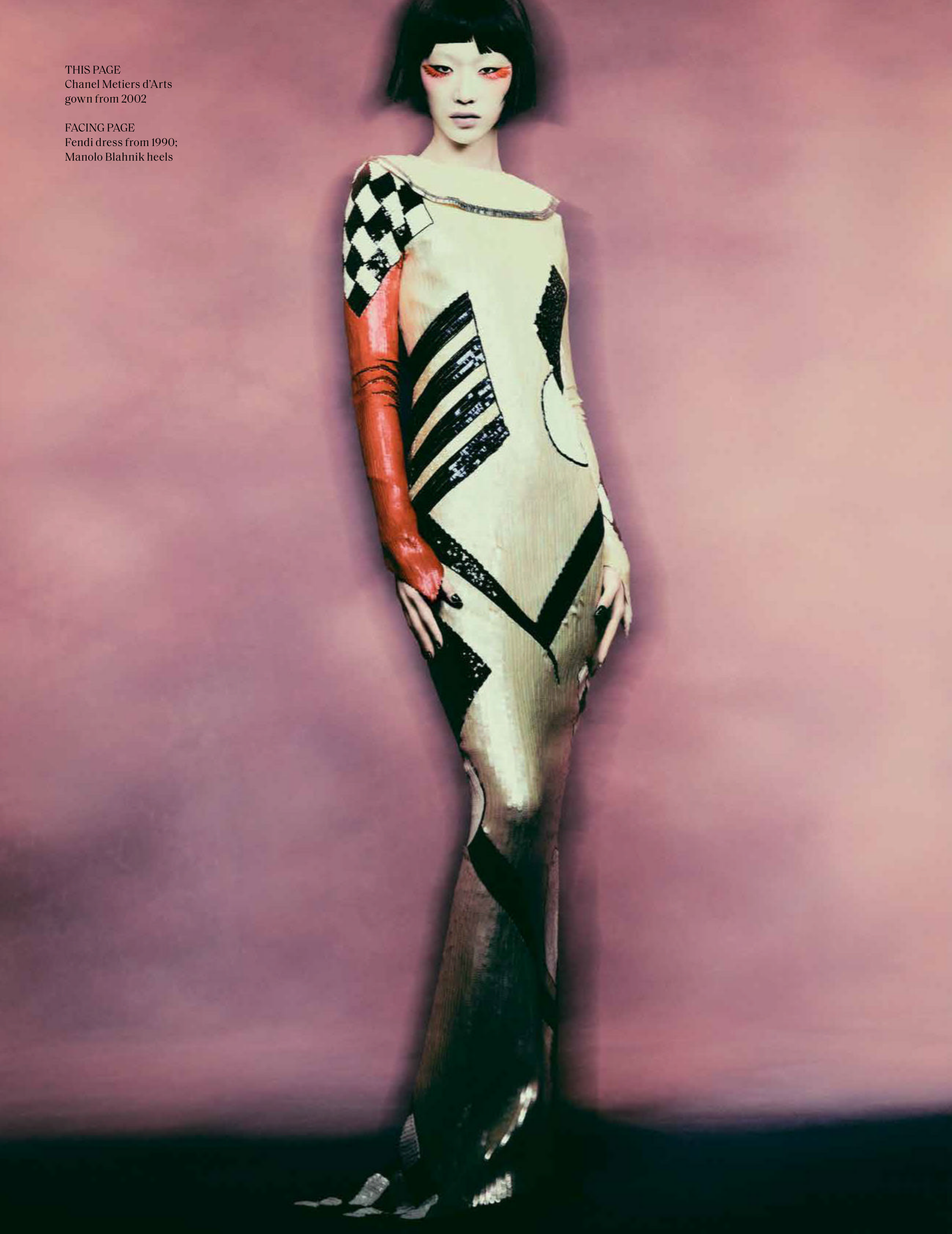
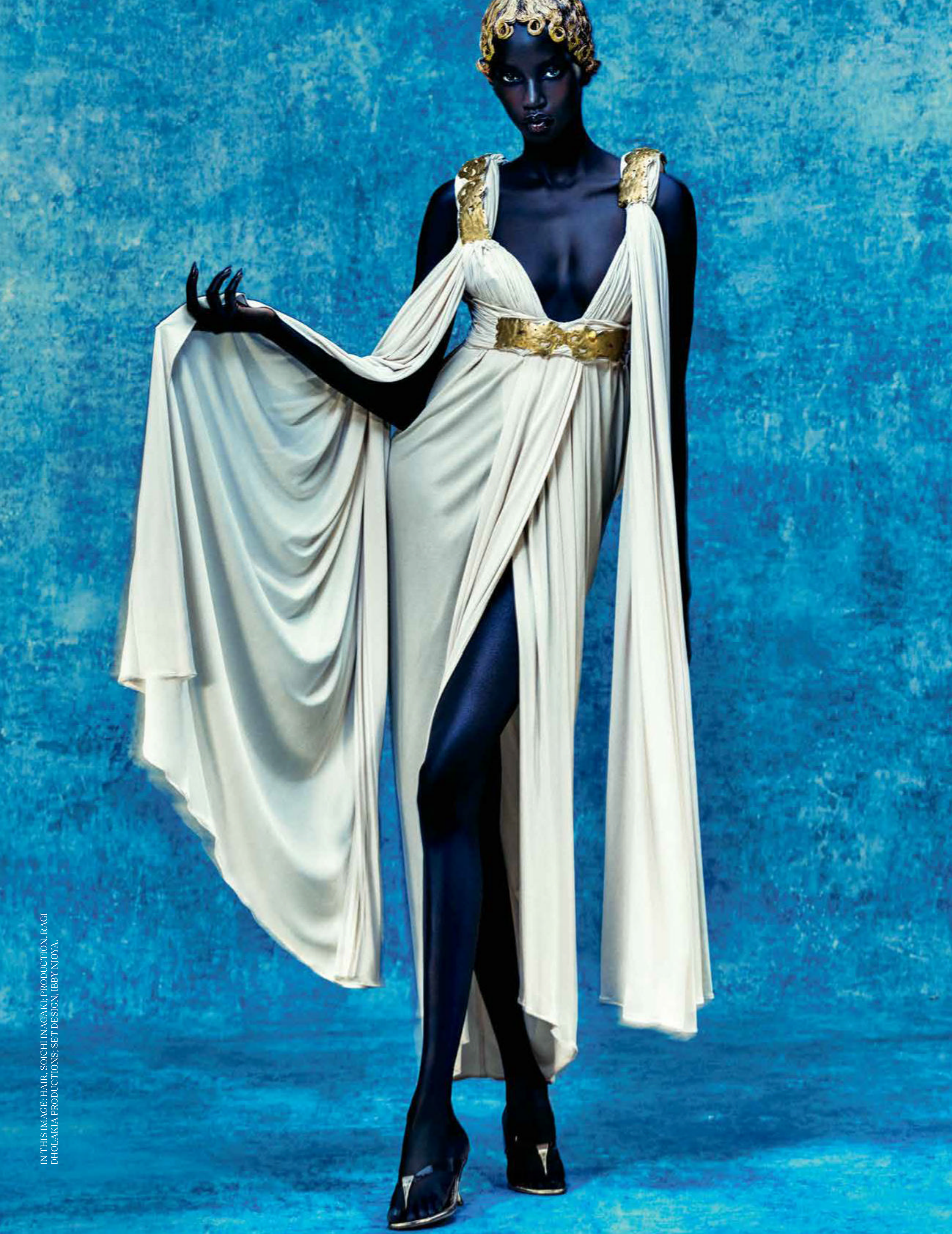
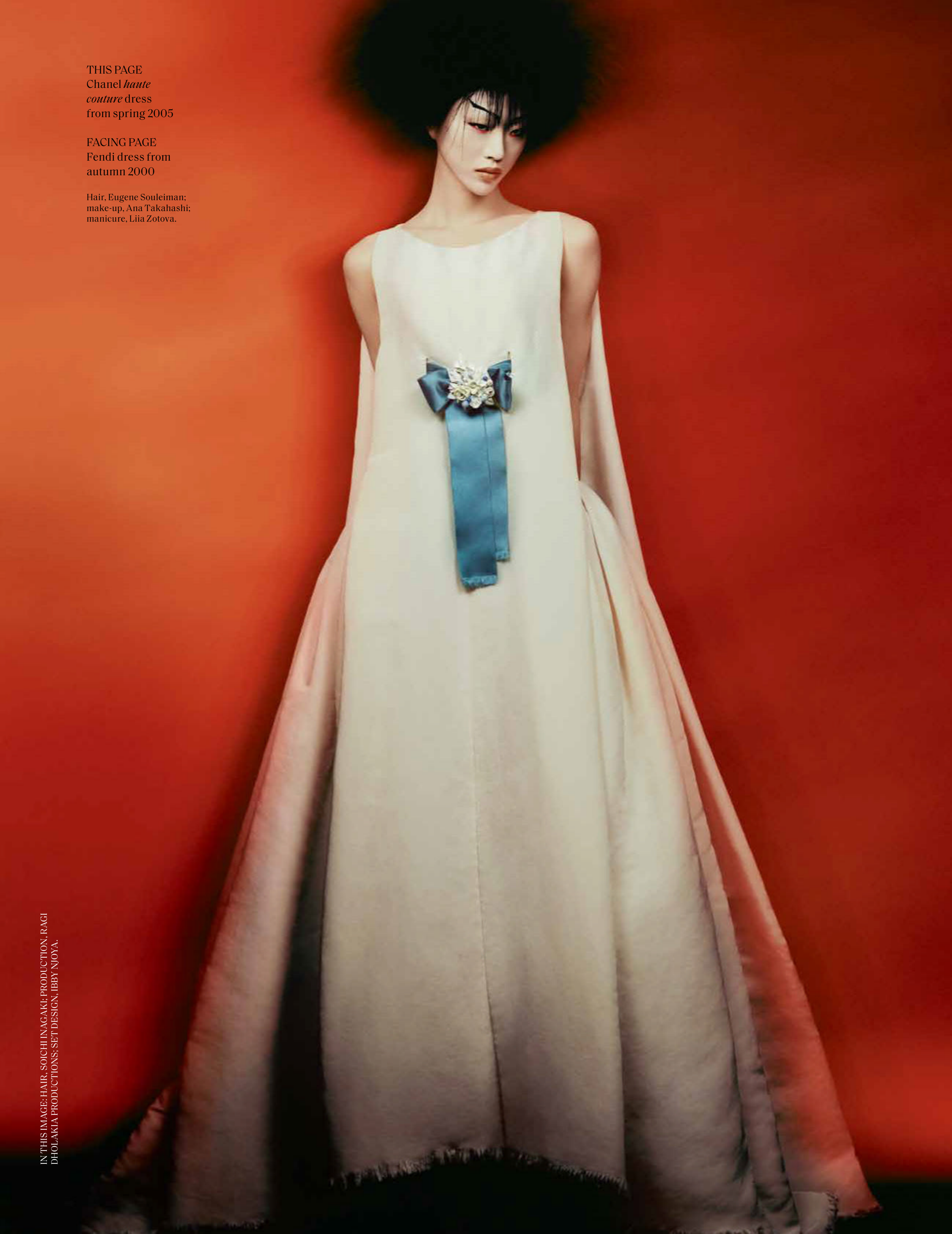
Fendi dress from 1990;
Manolo Blahnik heels





IN THIS IMAGE: HAIR, SOICHI INAGAKI; PRODUCTION, RAGI DHOLAKIA PRODUCTIONS; SET DESIGN, IBBY NJOYA.



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Chanel *haute couture* dress from spring 2005

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Fendi dress from autumn 2000

Hair, Eugene Souleiman; make-up, Ana Takahashi; manicure, Liia Zotova.

IN THIS IMAGE: HAIR, SOICHI INAGAKI; PRODUCTION, RAGI DHOLAKIA PRODUCTIONS; SET DESIGN, IBBY NJOYA.

QUESTIONS FOR A *disappearing inheritance*

Golden Mile Complex, built in 1973.

By POOJA NANSI

The need / to leave / something / behind /

is as old /as the oldest of languages / *pusaka* /means inheritance /
in Sanskrit /

but what if /we have already /lost /our tongues /

cannot sing / the same songs / our grandmothers did /what can we call ours /what more can we bear to lose /what if my daughter will never know /that the tunnel /our taxi drives through /was once /a sunlit library/

the roads we build to cut /ten minutes /off the commute /come at the cost /of a million / vanishing /stories /what can we ever dare to call /birthright /if there is nothing left /for us to bequeath /why do we keep bulldozing /loved concrete/

I want to give her /a walk down a noisy thieves market /blasting songs in/ Hokkien /Tamil /Bengali /a promise that /the place she has her first kiss /will still be standing /when she goes back a decade later /how can we fill in the missing pieces /of the city we love/

I want to take her /to the clubs /that witnessed my twenties /stumbling out /high /on cheap vodka /and the love of my friends /open fields next to an MRT /malls we went to after school /a skate-through McDonald's /can anything in this city survive /more than thirty years /that is not even /one lifetime/not even long enough /to pass down to /one generation /what more can we bear to lose /

where will we be able to take our children /that is not a manufactured nostalgia /how long /can we grieve/ what we cannot give /and try /to leave something behind anyway/

how do we remember the past when everything is always different here /what can we sing of /what can we save /in the face /of constant demolition /I want to offer a sweet prayer / for all that still remains /don't we know/ that lost places make for lost people/

and what will our children /and their children be able to hold on to /claim /as their own/I ask myself as the force of loss /comes charging at us /until they too /must see it all disappear /until they too -

IMAGE COURTESY OF FOTO MOMO

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